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# BENTLEY PRIORY.

BY

MRS. HASTINGS PARKER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## CHAPTER I.

It was towards the close of a sweet, calm evening, about the end of August, when the sun was sinking toward the western hills, and the deepening twilight had already tinged with its more sober hues the rich livery of autumnal green in which the woods of Bentley Priory had arrayed themselves. Many of the venerable oaks, whose gigantic

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shadows were now flung in deep masses athwart the landscape, were coeval with the old family mansion itself, the date whereof might probably be referred to the close of the seventeenth century, when the quaint characteristics which mark the domestic erections of the Elizabethan age gave place to the heavy, substantial architecture peculiar to the period of Louis the Fourteenth. "The Priory," as it was commonly designated—no one knew why—for neither monk nor prior had ever tenanted its luxurious chambers, abounded in mementos of the olden time, yet displayed in its erection, decorations, and accompaniments, that singular union of antique quaintness and modern luxury which is so peculiarly English. Trees of pri-

meval growth gave shelter to the red deer which browsed in undisturbed security beneath their shade, and at the same time afforded a resting-place to an ancient colony of rooks, whose length of possession and right of tenure were equally unknown and undisputed. A large tract of woodland stretched far away on every side, its thickets and copses as amply supplied with game of all sorts, as were the stables and the kennel with horses and sporting dogs of acknowledged superiority.

The house was approached by an antique avenue, of some quarter of a mile in length; and this, as well as the plantations and gardens—the productions of which could challenge competition with any in the county—was tended

and arranged with all the care and skill which combined wealth and good taste could command. The mansion itself had its long stone terrace, with the usual flight of many steps ; its old hall decorated with family portraits, in powdered wigs and stiff drapery ; its wide-spreading hearths and dark oaken wainscotting, the whole relieved by every comfort which modern luxury has invented, and embellished with all those elegancies in which modern female taste delights to display itself.

On the evening above-mentioned, Bentley Priory, with its extensive domain, lay buried in that deep delicious repose, which, in the abode of the opulent English squire, we so frequently find, combined with all that can charm the

eye and glad the heart. The gardens were vacant, the numerous apartments were untenanted; books and musical instruments lay unopened, and the scattered rustic seats, which were placed with apparent negligence in the shadiest spots, and near the most odoriferous shrubs with which the velvet surface of the lawn before the house was embroidered, were unoccupied—all, save one, on which reclined a young and very beautiful girl, whose blue eyes, fair complexion, and a profusion of sunny ringlets sufficiently betokened the Saxon descent from which her ancestors claimed their origin. A half-open book lay beside her, on which she had been striving to fix her attention, but unsuccessfully, for in truth her thoughts were at that moment far



away, and busied rather with the dull realities of life than with brightest fictions.

As she sat and gazed thoughtfully on the now fast declining rays of the setting sun, the surrounding silence was suddenly broken by the long, heavy clang of the great house-bell, and a few moments afterward the distant trampling of horses, and the merry sound of many voices, caused her to rise hastily from her seat, and, gathering together some flowers which lay beside her, she turned towards the house, and had just reached her chamber as a large group of equestrians galloped up the avenue, and, alighting at the hall door, dispersed in different directions to hasten to the duties of the toilet.

“Mademoiselle, quelle coiffure veut-elle

aujourd'hui ? ” said the silver-toned voice of Mademoiselle Célestine, who, having entered unperceived, now broke the reverie of her young mistress, as, placed near the open window of her sleeping apartment, she sat, her cheek resting on her hand, looking anxiously forth towards the shady avenue beyond. “ Mademoiselle, desire-t-elle une coiffure à la Grecque,” continued the waiting-maid, observing that her first address was unheeded ; “ ou bien cette charmante petite guirlande rose ? ”

“ La guirlande rose, si vous la voulez, Célestine,” interrupted the young lady, in a tone of marvellous indifference ; and the smart little Frenchwoman proceeded to disinter from its hiding-place the said “ guirlande - rose,” won-

dering the while at Mademoiselle's apathy upon a subject which, to her natural way of thinking, had always appeared one of vast importance. As she was thus employed, the sound of approaching wheels was heard, and presently a travelling carriage drove rapidly up the avenue, and, stopping short by the flight of steps before mentioned, the two persons within alighted just as Miss Morton descended the great staircase, and flew across the hall to receive and welcome them. The opportune appearance of sundry travelling cases, of which the carriage had been disencumbered reminded the whole party that the dinner hour was near at hand, and while poor tired Aunt Dorothy made her escape to her own apartment, Emily

carried off her sister to hers, there to consign her, with all requisite dispatch, to the careful adornment of Mademoiselle Célestine.

Who is there that has not at one time or other experienced the utter discomfort of arriving in a well-fitted country house long after the dressing-bell has sounded, and when the summons to dinner is every moment expected to peal forth its astounding notes? On the present occasion, however, the dexterous fingers of Mademoiselle Célestine were so expert in performing their office, that both the sisters were enabled, much to the satisfaction of their tirewoman, to descend in due time to the drawing-room, Emily having adopted the simple Grecian

coiffure before mentioned, in order that the "charmante petite guirlande rose" might be transferred from her own fair brow to that of her sister.

"You must let me be your *cavaliere servante* for this one day, Emily," said her cousin, Captain Grenville, of the Guards, as he offered his arm to conduct her to the dining-room. "To-morrow I shall be obliged, you know, to resign the privilege."

"Perhaps so."

"Perhaps? Do you not then hope to see Lord Errington to-morrow?"

"I suppose I do. At all events, I hope still to be allowed the right of retaining you for my young chevalier if I choose to do so. In fact," she continued, laughing, "as I am so soon to be

deprived of my liberty, I am resolved to enjoy it to the fullest extent as long as I can."

"In other words, you mean to teach Errington that those who are destined to command must first learn to obey."

"Of course—exactly so."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrangement of the guests at the dinner-table, a ceremony which, on the present occasion, was managed with a tact that would have done honour to Beau Nash himself. Mrs. Grenville Morton found herself supported on the right by old Lord Allington, whose estate joined that of Mr. Morton, and on the left by the Honourable Colonel Grantley, at present commanding a squadron of dragoons quartered in the neighbouring

town of ——, while her husband rejoiced in the vicinity of the antiquated Countess of Allington on one side, and his pretty, lively little niece, Lady Wrexham, on the other. Two gallant hussars, who, in deference to the presence of their commanding officer, had been compelled, for this day, to do penance in a brilliant uniform, were, in some degree, compensated for the discomfort of their stiff but gorgeous attire, by the wit and beauty of the two Miss Grenvilles, whose brother Charles, as we have seen, appropriated to himself the fascinations of his cousin Emily. Her sister Gertrude, dear, good Aunt Dorothy, and the eldest son of Mr. Morton, just returned from Oxford, completed the party.

“Are we to have the pleasure of see-



ing you at the races next week?" inquired the handsome and supereminently exquisite Captain Seymour of the youngest Miss Grenville, by whom he was seated.

"Oh, yes; I hope so," answered the young lady, who had just made her *début*, and to whom, consequently, the prospect of the races, and more especially of the race ball, presented a very attractive appearance.

"Will the ball be well attended?" pursued Captain Seymour, by way of saying something, but without raising his eyes from his plate.

"Every one in the county will be there, and Strauss is coming down from town on purpose."

"Indeed! You are fond of dancing, I suppose," and the hussar twirled his

moustache, and turned a scrutinizing glance upon his neighbour.

“Very—are not you?”

“Sometimes; but really—a—the rooms are so hot—a—and one gets so much of it in town—a—I scarcely ever dance, except at Almack’s.”

The hope of a dance with the “gentil houssard,” in his gay uniform, in which Emmy Grenville had, in the innocence of her heart, been indulging, in a moment vanished.

“Champagne, sir?” whispered the butler in the ear of the last speaker.

The son of Mars raised his glass, quaffed off its contents, complacently rearranged his moustache—paused a moment—turned one more glance towards his neighbour, and having digested the reflec-

tion that the repetition of so inimitable a dinner, with *such* champagne, might, perhaps, be purchased without sacrificing his dignity at the expense of only a single dance with the very pretty girl beside him, he turned to his fair companion.

“You valse, of course?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Perhaps, then, at the race ball — a—,” another twirl of the moustache, and a slight pause ensued to give due effect to what was coming — “you will allow me the honour?”

“I shall be most happy,” answered Miss Grenville, and, as she spoke, her countenance was lighted up with a beauty and animation which recommended Captain Seymour to his self-immolation on the ground of epicurism.

“Why would you not go with us to-day, Emily?” said Charles Grenville to his cousin; “we had such a beautiful ride.”

“I expected Aunt Dorothy and Gertrude would have been here earlier, and I preferred waiting to receive them.”

“Come now, confess the truth, did you not rather imagine that another certain somebody might have made his appearance?”

“No, indeed,” said Emily, quickly. “I thought of them, and them only.”

“Precisely what all young ladies say on similar occasions.”

“But few with equal sincerity, perhaps.”

Captain Grenville looked up inquir-

ingly, for the tone in which Emily spoke somewhat surprised him, but she had already turned to answer some commonplace remark made by her neighbour on the other side, and the conversation was not renewed.

## CHAPTER II.

MISS MORTON was an accomplished musician. Benedict and Garcia had both pronounced her their best amateur pupil—but the high reputation she had acquired was perhaps less attributable to an extensive knowledge of the science than to the taste and tact by which it was accompanied. No one ever talked when Emily Morton was playing,

because she always strove to please, rather than to astonish. Long fantasias, those especially of the modern thunder-and-lightning school, she particularly avoided.

Whatever was beautiful, whether it were new or old—an Italian cavatina, or a simple English ballad—found its way into Miss Morton's portfolio, and the judicious selection she was enabled to make imparted an ever-varying and novel charm to her performance.

When the gentlemen entered the drawing-room after dinner, the last full rich notes, which alone reached them, produced a general request for an encore, and with a grace peculiarly her own, Emily reseated herself at the instrument, and instantly complied.



“I had no idea that Miss Morton was so beautiful,” whispered Colonel Grantley, when the song was ended, to Lady Wrexham, whose acquaintance he had made the preceding autumn when quartered near Rock Castle, her husband’s seat in Ireland.

“You must surely have seen her frequently in London—she came out the year before last.”

“I have unfortunately not been in London the last two seasons.”

“Very true; I had forgotten how long you had been in banishment among the Goths in Ireland.”

“She was amazingly admired last season,” pursued Lady Wrexham, “and turned the heads of half the young men in town. Lord Errington ought to

consider himself a very fortunate person, I think."

"Is Miss Morton then engaged to be married?" inquired Colonel Grantley, with an interest he found it difficult to conceal.

"I thought I had told you so;—almost immediately, to Lord Errington."

"*The* Lord Errington?"

"And why not?"

"You mean Lord Errington of Trent-ham Abbey, of course?"

"Precisely. Ah, I remember our talking about him at the Rock Castle, but that was before I knew him. You have no idea how he was petted and fêted by all the mammas in London, that is, as far as was practicable, for they could rarely tempt the lion of

the day from his den, and even when they could, he was very intractable, I must acknowledge. Every mamma was *au désespoir*," continued Lady Wrexham, without perceiving the curl on Colonel Grantley's handsome lip, "when it was discovered that Emily Morton had carried off the prize."

"No doubt," and again the lip curled with the same undefinable expression as before. Lady Wrexham looked up, but without vouchsafing an answer. She was very fond of Emily, very well pleased at the idea of the Countess's coronet, a good deal puzzled, and a little annoyed at Colonel Grantley's manner; but the announcement of Lord Allington's equipage prevented any further conversation, and Colonel Grantley, after making

his adieus to herself, and the rest of the party, mounted his horse, and pursued his way homewards.

“She is very lovely and very fascinating,” he soliloquized, as he rode slowly through the avenue of Bentley Priory. “Pity that so beautiful a vision should thus in a moment be robbed of its enchantment. But all women, nursed in the same hotbed of dissipation, are alike frivolous at heart, and worshippers of Mammon.”

How prone we all are to judge unreflectingly, and therefore hardly, of the conduct of others! How many a noble and generous heart has been thus accused—falsely accused—of feelings and motives to which it is an utter stranger. It is easy enough to judge the mere

actions of others, but the motives which influence them, the secret struggle—the silent, and perhaps agonizing, self-sacrifice, the thousand causes which produce results often so apparently unaccountable—justly to estimate, or even to comprehend, these, belongs to Infinite Wisdom alone. I believe that an unkind or erroneous judgment of our fellow-beings proceeds quite as frequently from thoughtlessness as from malice. We are apt to judge hastily, and therefore harshly. We forget how often our own best actions are misinterpreted, our very words misconstrued. We forget the bitterness of unmerited censure till the lesson is brought home to ourselves, and then we demand from others that indulgence which

too frequently we concede so sparingly in return. Happy were it for mankind in general, could we resolve to estimate the conduct of those around us by that beautiful standard of Christian benevolence which enjoins us to judge of others as we would that others should judge of us. And happier still were it for ourselves, could we learn the task of patient and cheerful submission, which, by enabling us to base our contentment upon the fulness of a self-approving conscience—on a foundation impervious alike to the shafts of malice and the misconstructions of error, would make *motive* at once the spring of every action and the reward of every sacrifice.

## CHAPTER III.

THE guests had all departed; Emily and Gertrude had retired to the chamber which was allotted for their joint use; Mademoiselle Célestine, after having disrobed her young ladies for the night, was dismissed from further attendance, and the sisters were left alone together.

“At length this tedious evening is ended,” exclaimed Gertrude, casting her



arms around her sister, as the door closed upon their tirewoman. "At length, dearest Emily, we are alone, and I can freely give you my congratulations, and tell you how many and how earnest have been my prayers and wishes for your happiness."

"Thank you, thank you, dearest Gertrude," said Emily, affectionately returning the embrace of her sister—"yours are indeed valuable; for they are amongst the very, very few on whose sincerity I can really rely."

"Aunt Dorothy, too, has been more anxious about you than you can imagine, for you know her horror of London and all its belongings," said Gertrude, smiling. "I really believe she has thought and talked of nothing

else from the moment mamma's first letter reached us, and is nearly as impatient as I am to make Lord Errington's acquaintance."

"You will both be gratified to-morrow."

"So my cousin Charles tells me. But have I not seen Lord Errington already? It struck me that he had passed two days at the Priory during our visit last year."

"Did he? I think not," said Emily, abstractedly, "or you would not fail to remember him."

"Is he then so very handsome? But the question is not fair to you, Emmy."

"To me? Why not fair to me, dear Gertrude?"

“And Caroline tells me he is, besides, the kindest, most excellent person in the world. How happy you must be, dearest sister.”

“I suppose I must,” said Emily, as with a sigh she sank into a chair, and continued abstractedly to remove the fastening which bound her luxuriant tresses.

“And you *are* happy, Emmy, are you not?” said Gertrude tenderly, as, kneeling beside her, she wound her arms round her sister, and looked anxiously up into her face.

“Oh, yes — of course, dear — very happy,” said Emily, with a smile of meaning so doubtful that the blood froze in Gertrude’s lips as she attempted to answer ; “who could be

otherwise, for does not all the world say so ? ”

“ Emily ! ”

“ Well, dear—have I not said truly ? The world is always right, you know,” and Emily gazed earnestly in her sister’s face as she knelt before her.

“ The world is *not* always right,” said Gertrude, in an earnest tone. “ Oh, no ; not if it says that. *My* Emmy could never be happy in marrying for mere rank and fortune ; I know she could not.”

“ Did I say so ? Indeed I did not mean it,” said Emily, passing her hand across her forehead. “ Now do not look so grave, my dear, sage little sister,” added she, resuming, but with some effort, her own playful manner, “ or

you will make me fancy my future husband a Bluebeard, and myself a Fatima. Lord Errington is all—yes all,” she added, earnestly, “that is kind and good—indeed he is.” Again she paused. “He will neither cut off my head, nor even shut me up in a blue chamber,” and the same smile as before passed over her features. “The truth is,” she continued, again raising her hand to her temples, “that I have had a dreadful headache all day, and am very tired. I shall be quite well to-morrow; indeed I shall,” she added, observing that Gertrude remained silent and motionless, “and very angry with myself too, dearest Gertrude, for having received your felicitations so ungraciously.”

“You do look both pale and tired,

dearest. Let me gather up your hair for you," said Gertrude, rising, and busying herself with her sister's attire, to conceal a tear which was silently stealing down her own cheek.

"Thank you, dearest; and then let us to bed. A good night's rest will refresh us both, I think."

## CHAPTER IV.

IT was almost immediately after his marriage that Mr. Grenville Morton had, by the unexpected death of a cousin, succeeded to the fine property to which allusion has been made in the first chapter. Increased possessions invariably bring with them increased requirements, and thus, after a few years spent in the seclusion of Bentley Priory, Mrs. Morton

became suddenly aware that, for the advantage of her children, an annual migration to London was necessary. For their benefit also, it was deemed requisite to establish herself without loss of time on the *terra firma* of the world of fashion, a task which, though involving some toil and trouble, she nevertheless speedily accomplished. No people, indeed, could have been better qualified for insinuating themselves into the good graces of the leaders of ton. Mr. Morton was universally allowed to be gentlemanly, good-looking, and well-dressed. Mrs. Morton was lady-like, pretty; and her toilet, too, was at all times perfect. Neither was very wise, but both were good-tempered, yielding, and inoffensive. In the appointment of



their establishment everything was perfect — their equipage was faultless, their dinners equally so; and though at their balls the larger proportion of the guests were untitled, yet still there were always quite enough high-sounding names to fill up a very respectable paragraph in the *Morning Post* on the following morning. The closing triumph of the season, previous to Emily's presentation, was an invitation to a grand *fête*, given at D—— House, and Mr. and Mrs. Morton had the satisfaction, two days afterwards, of beholding their names in the *Morning Post* and *Court Journal* as among the noble and distinguished guests there assembled.

Thus everything went smoothly. Their means were ample, their tempers har-

monious, their children as fine a group as could well be seen. In the last particular, indeed, they were generally pronounced to be peculiarly fortunate. Mr. and Mrs. Morton were said to be at once the best and the happiest parents in the world—and so they were, according to the notions of their caste. They were tenderly attached to their children, and anxiously solicitous to see them shine in the circles wherein they were destined to move; no expense was therefore spared in their education—no gratification was denied them. Mrs. Morton herself regulated their dress, which was as faultless as the most perfect taste and the most elaborate expenditure could make it. She hired the nurses and selected the teacher to

whom their childhood was entrusted. She would have watched over them in sickness, and have mourned over them in death, with all the yearnings of a mother's heart. And they had warm and affectionate hearts, and loved her tenderly in return, but it was a love unmingled with any deeper feeling. There was no looking up to her as a model of goodness, no cherishing of precepts instilled by *her* all-persuasive lips. Mrs. Morton had not time for these things. She was an affectionate mother, but she was a fashionable London lady too. She forgot that the duties of the one are incompatible with an undue indulgence in the pleasures of the other.

Does a fashionable fine-lady mother,

when thus delegating to others the task which should be so peculiarly her own, ever pause to reflect on the treasure she is casting from her, or on the sacred duty she is violating? It is a mistake to suppose that the minds of very little children need no tending, and are destitute both of thought and memory. It is the indelible impressions gathered during the years of infancy, that stamp the character through life. It is then peculiarly that a mother's precepts sink into the young heart in characters ineffaceable by time or absence; and even though an early death may blot out her features from our childish recollection, yet still the gentle accents from whence our first lessons in virtue were imbibed — the tender

mother's voice that first taught our infant heart to raise itself in prayer, will rest on the memory with its sacred and soothing influence, though long, long years may have passed away, and all other traces of her existence have been forgotten. The impressions of our later years — our closest friendships — our most passionate attachments, may, amid the thousand varied excitements of the world, be blotted out; but the deep love and veneration wherein our childish fancy was accustomed to enshrine the image of her who was at once the tender mother and the gentle monitor of our infant years will cling round the heart till the latest hour of existence.

From the preceptors, whose only duties consisted in rendering Mrs. Mor-

ton's children accomplished young men and young women of fashion, her boys acquired such modes of thinking as were deemed most suitable to the purpose. They were taught that it was ungentlemanlike to lie, and ungentlemanlike to swear; and further, that to omit certain forms, and to *commit* certain actions, was a sin against good breeding; and as Nature had gifted them with sunny tempers, generous feelings, and a peculiarly prepossessing appearance, the young Mortons, after a few years spent between Eton and the University—where they acquired as much knowledge as was deemed requisite, and got into fewer scrapes than most young men—were generally pronounced to be finished specimens of English gentlemen.

Mrs. Morton's daughter was esteemed a no less perfect model of successful education. Her talents had been improved under the tuition of first-rate masters, and Emily's natural taste for music not only rendered her a proficient in the science, but imparted a peculiar charm to her performance even of the simplest air. Mrs. Morton was naturally anxious, too, that her girls should speak with fluency the language of foreign countries. Their governess, therefore, was a French woman; so was the *femme de chambre*, whose exclusive duty it was to wait on the young ladies; while the *bonne*, who was their constant attendant during the years of childhood, was an Italian. The French and Italian languages were thus as familiar to them



as their own. To these attractions were superadded a toilet of faultless elegance, and a graceful ease of manner—the result of early habitude with the forms of society. In truth, there could scarcely have been seen a lovelier creature than Emily Morton on the momentous morning of her first presentation at Court. Never was there a happier, gentler, purer, more guileless heart than hers, as she rose on that morning, full of glad anticipations of the new world of pleasure into which she was about to enter.



## CHAPTER V.

“A QUARTER past eleven, and Isidore not come yet,” exclaimed Emily, as, laying down the last volume of the last new novel, she rose once more to look at the beautiful Parisian timepiece which graced the mantel-piece of the drawing-room in Portland Place. “Surely, mamma, he is not going to disappoint us.”

“Do sit still, my love; you know Isidore is never exact,” said Mrs. Morton, who began to fancy that the increased bloom on her daughter’s cheek was the shadow of a shade too deep to be becoming. “You really must keep yourself quiet, or I shall have you look as if you were rouged.”

“Well, my dear mamma,” said she, laughingly, “I will be quiet for the next five minutes, at least, since you wish it; though surely, if people did think I was rouged, it could not matter much.”

“My dear child, how silly you are!”

“Well, but seriously, mamma, I have often heard you say that Caroline would not look half so well with-

out a little rouge. Surely there is no harm in wearing it."

"None in the world, love; but very great harm in *looking* as if you wore it. With Caroline the deception is perfect." And as Mrs. Morton spoke, she stooped her own delicately tinted cheek to kiss the offending one of her daughter, which truly might have emulated the colour of the rose.

Mrs. Morton was spared the necessity of any more definite elucidation of the maxim she had just inculcated, which was fortunate, for Emily, who was quite at a loss to comprehend the distinction at which her mother had hinted, might perchance have started inquiries not very readily or satisfactorily answered.

The stopping of a cabriolet at the door drove the matter very opportunely out of her head.

It was that of the prince of *perruquiers* himself, and in two minutes more Emily's luxuriant light brown tresses were undergoing the process of transmogrification beneath his super-excellent and super-eminent fingers.

The Drawing-room, that day was very full, for there had been an interregnum, during which the fairer portion of the creation had been excluded from the presence of Royalty, and thus, before two o'clock, the state apartments of St. James's became thronged with a glittering crowd, presenting as brilliant and beautiful a spectacle as can well be imagined.

“Ha!—*you* here,” drawled Sir Geoffrey Charlton, addressing a remarkably handsome and distinguished-looking young man, who, in the pressure of the crowd, had been driven near him. “I had no idea you were in England; I thought you had cut us altogether.”

“I only landed two days ago.”

“For the season—eh?”

“Possibly. I came here thinking it the best place to find out who is in town.”

“Why, all London is here, I should think; but as for seeing or speaking to a human being in such a crowd as this—it’s really horrid.”

No answer was vouchsafed, and Sir Geoffrey went on:—

“They manage these things much better

abroad — in Paris, for instance. No staring daylight there, and plenty of room. Upon my honour, I wonder the ladies here put up with it."

"I do not suppose that it is left to their decision," replied the other, with a smile, half laughing, half contemptuous.

"We certainly could not find room at St. James's for the citizen thousands of the Tuileries."

"Are you just from Paris?" drawled the dandy again.

"Yes."

"Any one there now?"

"I only stayed a day, and therefore do not know," and the young man contrived to make his way from Sir Geoffry's side, and commenced scanning with the eye of a connoisseur the blaze of beauty

around him. He was not slow in deciding that, whatever the fascinations of other countries, on the score of female beauty England would yield to none.

“Seymour, can you tell me who is that lovely girl standing in the middle window?” inquired he of an ensign in the Guards, near whom he now found himself.

“Ah, Mr. Mandeville in England!—how do you do?” exclaimed the voice of a very pretty little lady, provokingly, on the other side, and the last speaker was compelled to turn his head and to abandon all hope of an answer to his inquiry.

“I am so very glad to see you; Lady Emmeline is well, I hope.”

“Quite.”

“And Sir William?”

“‘Grazie, sta benissimo’—but I have lost him in the crowd. You are here just at the right moment. Pray have pity, and be my *preux chevalier* until I can find him again.”

“I shall be too happy to do my best,” said Mr. Mandeville, who by this time had forgotten the beauty in the middle window. “If your ladyship will take my arm, I think I can be of more service.”

“With many thanks; and now tell me, when did you arrive?”

“But yesterday, or I should have been ere this to pay my respects in Bruton Street.”

“Well, you must come and see me to-morrow. I shall have half a thousand



questions to ask you about dear Rome and delightful Naples. What a horrid place London must appear to you after them."

"Scarcely so, since I have the pleasure of finding you here," and the words were accompanied by a certain bow and smile, which plainly indicated that they meant nothing.

"Nonsense," said the lively little beauty, who perfectly understood the value of the compliment, and yet would not have dispensed with it for the world. "Tell me, what have you been doing in dear Italy since we left it? How did you leave the dear old Marchese? Did he give any more of those delightful festas at his beautiful villa after we came away?"

“The Marchese was taken ill almost immediately after your departure from Naples,” answered Mr. Mandeville; “and you will be sorry to hear that he died just before I left it.”

“Oh, how sorry I am! — what a dear old man he was,” exclaimed her ladyship, with a momentary touch of feeling, and for a minute or two she was silent. “There, now; how provoking,” continued she, almost in the same breath; “my lappet has caught again upon that odious epaulette. I wish they would prohibit epaulettes at Drawing-rooms,” and she raised her hand to extricate, if possible, the delicate fabric from utter annihilation.

“Mille pardons, madame,” said the

very tall Polish colonel of Lancers behind her, to whose shoulder the little beauty found herself thus suddenly pinioned, and who, having lately fallen from his native *skis*, on the fat of the land in hospitable England, was about to submit the last new History of Poland to the protection of royalty.

Mr. Mandeville raised his hand to assist in the process of disentanglement, but it proved beyond his skill; and the difficult task was finally accomplished by a good-natured lady on the other side, without any apparent damage having been sustained. The little beauty turned her head to thank her deliverer, but in so doing her feathers tickled the nose of a lawyer behind her, who, jerking his head back with a sudden movement to escape

from the focus of titillation, caught his wig on the right shoulder epaulette of the before-named Polish colonel, which wresting it completely away, upset the centre of gravity, and discovered the secret of the bald pate beneath.

“What the deuce, sir,” exclaimed the little lawyer, waxing very wroth and very red, at the discomfiture of his pericranium, while every fresh jerk, in his ineffectual efforts at emancipation, brought him nearer to the fate of Johnny Gilpin.

“Pardon, monsieur—I am very sorry, sare,” said the luckless cause of the disaster, with a tolerably grave face, for being quite close to, and considerably taller than, his victim, he was fortunately prevented seeing the full extent of the ludicrous change in his appearance.

But the little lawyer's wrath was now diverted from its original object by the ill-concealed mirth visible on the countenances of all those round him, for the metamorphosis in his appearance was perfectly irresistible; nor was its absurdity diminished when, after having by two more successive and violent jerks succeeded in effecting his deliverance, and in re-instating his *perruque* in a tolerably correct position, he looked round, half stifled with indignation, for some opening through which to effect his exit.

But there was no help for it. The belligerent parties were so closely wedged together, that for those to get out who had once got in would have been little short of an impossibility; for the diminutive lawyer it could have been effected

only at the imminent risk of annihilation. He was therefore fain to rest content with gradually insinuating himself into a position more remote from the dangers which had lately threatened so woful a catastrophe -- there to exercise his patience by watching till the commencement of the general presentations should, by diminishing of the pressure of the crowd, lessen the chances of further annoyance.

Never had there been so crowded a Drawing-room; never so brilliant a display of female beauty, nor so costly an array of sparkling jewels. The anterooms to the Presence Chamber now presented one vast mass of plumes, and gems, and uniforms; but the effect of the brilliant assembly was in some measure lost by

the density of the crowd, which, in consequence of the doors giving entrance to the Presence Chamber being still closed, was unable to dispose itself through the various apartments; and as fresh arrivals were at each moment taking place, the heat and suffocation were gradually becoming scarcely endurable.

“Have they opened all the windows?” inquired Lady Wrexham of Mr. Mandeville, on whose arm she was leaning, really in need of support, for the heated atmosphere was quite overpowering.

“I am afraid they have,” said he, looking round to ascertain if it were so, and the movement revealed to him once more the same beautiful features concerning which he had been inquiring when the voice of his volatile companion had driven



them from his recollection. He was about to renew his question, but Lady Wrexham was evidently suffering. She had turned very pale, and all his attention was, of course, directed towards her.

“I fear you find the heat overpowering,” said he, in dread of the impending scene, which, under existing circumstances, would have been peculiarly inconvenient. “Would you prefer going into the open air? If you will permit me, I think I can—”

“Oh, no, thank you very much; by no means—I shall be better presently. See, they are opening the doors now.”

The fresh current of air thus admitted, and the enlarged space and breathing-room afforded by the flowing of the stream into the adjoining apartments, on its way to the



presence of royalty, was a source of equal satisfaction to Mr. Mandeville and his companion, and a few minutes brought back the colour to her cheek, and the vivacity to her manner.

“I really am very much obliged to you,” said she, “and would make you my very best curtsey, were such a manœuvre practicable without the risk of further disaster. What should I have done had I been reduced to seek the aid either of that grim-looking Pole, or of the fierce little lawyer?”

“Ah, there is Sir William, at last,” she continued, without waiting for an answer, as she perceived her husband endeavouring to make his way through the crowd towards them. “So now your devoirs for to-day are happily ended.”

“Pray, reward me by saying who is that lady to whom Sir William is speaking.”

Lady Wrexham moved her head, and raised herself on tiptoe, but all to no purpose. A sea of waving plumes effectually intercepted her vision.

“It must have been old Lady Allington, I think,” said she. “I thought you knew her.”

“Oh, no; it was a young lady—very young. This must be her first Drawing-room, I think.”

“I do not know who it could be; how was she dressed?”

“Really, I do not know,” said he, smiling; “I am no great connoisseur in ladies’ dress.”

“How provoking men are,” exclaimed

Lady Wrexham, still moving her head from side to side, to obtain a view of the new beauty—"Englishmen, at least; the most *recherché* toilet is quite thrown away upon them, and that is the reason why so many Englishwomen are perfect dowdies. A Frenchman can tell the precise position of every one's bow on one's bonnet, and even how many ells of silk should be employed in the manufacture of a dress."

"An enviable accomplishment," said Mr. Mandeville, smiling; but he did not attempt to combat her ladyship's assertion.

Meanwhile, Lady Wrexham was compelled to abandon any further scrutiny as hopeless. The new beauty had vanished with the brilliant throng passing through

the opposite doorway, while Sir William stood patiently beside it, awaiting his pretty little wife's approach as she passed on with the stream in the same direction.

“Ha! Mandeville, how are you? I am very glad to see you,” was the cordial greeting of Sir William Wrexham, a lieutenant-general of a certain age, covered with orders and decorations, whose worth, combined with particularly gentlemanlike and pleasing manners, had won for him the hand and heart of the giddy little beauty, who, though considerably younger than himself, loved him with the warm affection which his kindness and excellence could scarcely fail to inspire.

“You owe him infinite gratitude, Sir William. Mr. Mandeville has a second

time saved me from the jaws of destruction," said Lady Wrexham to her husband.

"Indeed," said he, smiling.

"He will tell you all about it," and Lady Wrexham, with a little nod and a smile, which Sir William, with great truth, thought infinitely becoming, passed on to make her obeisance to royalty with a graver countenance and a more dignified step than could have been well expected from her previous manner.

On making her exit at the opposite door, she joined a group of persons who had just passed out before her. It was that of her uncle, Mr. Morton, with his pretty wife and her beautiful daughter Emily. Old Lord and Lady Allington were of the party; the former discussing with Mr.

Morton the propriety of his standing for the borough of Bentley at the impending election; while the latter, who had succeeded in finding a seat, was engaged in scrutinising through her eye-glass the exquisite natural blush-roses with which Emily's bodice and train were looped.

"Oh, no; mamma had them over from Paris on purpose for me," said the *débutante*, in answer to some question from the old lady, whose advanced age formed a melancholy and most unbecoming contrast to the youthful fashion of her attire.

"I should suppose so. We have no such artificial flowers as these in England. The French do certainly excel us in all these things."

"They excel us in all that is *artifi-*

*cial*," interposed Lord Allington, with a supercilious sniff, and who, being one of the ultra-English school, had, on hearing the preference accorded to anything foreign, broken off his electioneering discussion in the pith of the argument, for no other purpose than to give to his antiquated but gaily-dressed lady countess the retort *uncourteous*.

"Caught in the very fact," exclaimed the lively voice of Lady Wrexham, who joined them at the moment. "Oh, fie! Lord Allington, after all your promises of amendment."

The earl smiled. No one could have been angry with Lady Wrexham.

"And so, the dreaded presentation is over at last, *ma belle cousine*," said she to Emily, "*Je vous fais mon compliment*,



ma chère. The Court plume is wonderfully becoming, I never saw her look so well," said she, turning good-naturedly to Mrs. Morton, "and her dress is perfect," and she ran her eye over the various parts of Emily's attire with an approving glance.

"I think it is pretty," said Mrs. Morton, in her quiet, lady-like way.

"And now tell me, ma belle, did any of the evils chance, which you seemed to dread so much, while performing your act of obeisance."

"Oh, no—not one," said Emily, laughing; "but still I am very glad it is over, for, do you know, I could think of nothing the whole time but the history you had given me of poor Lady Mandeville's disasters on the slippery *parquet* at Brussels."



“Hush,” whispered Lady Wrexham, and the one word was accompanied by a comical look of dismay, which plainly indicated that the allusion to the history, which no doubt had lost nothing in her ladyship’s relation of it, was somewhat ill-timed. Emily perceived that she had done wrong, and her cheek, which had before been somewhat pale from the heated and nervous ordeal through which she had just passed, became in a moment as nearly akin to the colour of the rose as possible. Not so Lady Wrexham, who was too well accustomed to the little misadventure into which her thoughtless volatility was constantly leading her, to feel any embarrassment, though Mr. Mandeville, of whose mother, Lady Mandeville, the incident alluded to had been related,

in the privacy of her ladyship's boudoir, with a drollery which rendered it perfectly irresistible, had approached so near as to be all but within hearing just at the moment when the unlucky speech was uttered.

“Mr. Mandeville,” said she, turning towards him, with the same unembarrassed manner as before, and determined at once to crush all evil consequences.

The colour in poor Emily's cheek deepened as the name was pronounced which revealed to her her indiscretion, and her eyes fell as they encountered the admiring gaze of Mr. Mandeville, for in her he instantly recognised the same lovely face seen in the middle window, and concerning which he had made so many fruitless inquiries.

“Mr. Mandeville, I must present you to my cousin, Miss Morton,” said Lady Wrexham; and then left Mandeville to conquer her cousin’s obvious embarrassment in his own peculiarly felicitous manner.

“I suppose you go to the opera, to-night?” said she, turning to Mrs. Morton.

“I intended it; but I am really so tired, I fear I shall scarcely be able. I must make the attempt, however, for I know Emily wishes to go.”

“Oh, give her to me, then, for to-night,” said Lady Wrexham. “Princess Cesaria has given me her box; and I shall be too delighted to have her.”

“With many thanks.”

“*Carina*, you are coming with me to the opera,” she continued, turning to

Emily, who by this time had recovered sufficiently to look up and answer some remarks of Mr. Mandeville. "Princess Cesaria has lent me her box, and the opera will be magnificent. I will call for you at half-past eight. Till then a rivederla, carina," and passing her arm through her husband's, she moved on towards the door.

The rest of the party soon followed. Mandeville, as a matter of course, offering his arm to conduct Miss Morton downstairs.

How often would the cup of present happiness be embittered, could we read the secrets of futurity.

## CHAPTER VI.

LADY WREXHAM'S carriage was at the door, in Portland Place, punctually at the hour appointed, and Emily, who had disencumbered herself of her train, but who still wore the Court plume, which had, with great justice, been pronounced eminently becoming, in less than two minutes found herself seated in the other corner of it, and on her way to the opera.

“ Oh, I am so much obliged to you, Caroline,” exclaimed she; “ poor mamma has such a dreadful head-ache, she would have been quite unable to go, and I could not miss the opera to-night for the world.”

“ It would have been an unpardonable sin to the world to have let you do so, carina. I have no idea of your ‘wasting your sweetness on the desert air.’”

“ Good gracious, Caroline, what an unlucky speech that was of mine this morning,” exclaimed Emily, suddenly breaking into the subject which was uppermost in her thoughts; “ why, you had told me Mr. Mandeville was in Italy.”

“ I thought him so; but he arrived in town last night. A little mal-à-propos, certainly,” said Lady Wrexham, laughing;

“but I do not suppose he heard you.”

“I am sure I hope not, or what must he have thought of me?”

“What must he have thought of *me*, rather? But it is no great matter, carina, I seemed to have made him an ample amende honorable by introducing him to a better acquaintance with your *beaux yeux*.”

“All I can say is, then, that he is easily pacified. I had laughed so heartily over your history of poor Lady Emmeline’s disasters, and felt so confused and conscience-stricken, that I really hardly knew what I was saying or doing when he spoke to me.”

“You would have laughed ten times more had you been present at it. Lady

Emmeline is, as I told you, particularly stately in her manner, and has a perfect horror of any breach of etiquette. Only conceive, then, instead of the dignified curtsy she had prepared, her falling flat on her face, after sundry slippings and slidings, before the whole Court, exactly as the Queen came to speak to her. And then her ineffectual struggles to rise, which, entangled as she was with her train, was next to an impossibility, for the *parquet* was literally as slippery as a looking-glass. I believe we should all have expired in our efforts to preserve decorum, had it not been for the boldness of one of the aids-de-camp, who, in defiance of all etiquette, stepped forward to her ladyship's assistance, and thus put an end to our tortures."



“And who are these Mandevilles that I have heard so much talk about?” inquired Emily; but as she spoke the carriage turned the corner of Charles Street, and, dashing up to the door of the Opera-house, Lady Wrexham’s beautiful bays were in a moment stopped short by one masterly touch of London coachmanship. Sir William was waiting to hand the two ladies from the carriage, and in a few minutes the trio found themselves ensconced in that most luxurious of all luxurious places — a first-rate opera-box. After waiting in silence till the beautiful cavatina, which Grisi was singing as they entered, had ended, and then whispering a word of some engagement at the club, and a promise to return before the opera was over, Sir William vanished, leaving his lady wife and Emily

to the *tête-à-tête* enjoyment of the scene before them.

“Will you have my *lorgnette*, Emily?” said Lady Wrexham, as she transferred her opera-glass from her own hand to that of her cousin.

“Thank you,” and Emily raised the glass, and turned it towards the stage, for Grisi was in the midst of one of her finest scenas in “Norma.”

She returned it in a few moments to Lady Wrexham, who immediately recommenced her reconnoitering of the several boxes wherein she might expect to discover an acquaintance, for already from many beamed forth the same lovely faces that had graced the Reception of the morning, most of them, like herself, wearing the graceful plume and rich jewels which on a Court

night render the opera so brilliant and beautiful a spectacle. Emily, meanwhile, wholly absorbed in the music, sat with her eyes riveted on the stage, and utterly forgetful of everything else around her.

“Hah ! le voilà,” exclaimed Lady Wrexham, breaking mercilessly into the very heart of Grisi’s concluding *roulade*.

“Oh, yes — there he is,” whispered Emily, keeping her eyes still fixed on the stage, on which, as the last song ended, the hero of the piece, who was personated by her favourite Mario, was making his appearance. “He is going to sing that lovely duet with Grisi.”

“Going to sing a duet with Grisi, carina ! What—Mr. Mandeville !”

“No, no—Mario,” said Emily, provoked at any interruption to the delicious strains

to which she would fain have been listening.

“But *I* was speaking of Mr. Mandeville,” whispered Lady Wrexham, maliciously.

“Oh, in mercy, hush !” exclaimed Emily, who at that moment cared not for all the Mr. Mandevilles on the face of the earth, and her giddy little ladyship *was* merciful enough to resume in silence the exercise of her *lorgnette*.

“And now,” said Emily, as the curtain fell at the close of the act, and both drew themselves back into the shade, to enjoy a quiet little *tête-à-tête*, “and now I am ready to listen to all you have to say concerning this Mr. Mandeville, with whose name you appear resolved to break my peace. You have made me curious. To

begin from the beginning, then, who is he?"

"A nephew of Lord Trentham."

"Of Trentham Abbey?"

"Yes; his mother was the only daughter of the old earl, from whom, very probably, she acquired the stateliness of manner for which *he* was so remarkable. She was, I have heard, extremely beautiful, and had half the best matches in England at her feet; but unfortunately she preferred Mr. Mandeville to them all, much to the indignation of her father, who had set his heart upon seeing her a duchess, whereas Mr. Mandeville, who belonged to an ancient but impoverished gentleman's family in Cornwall, and had, I believe, very little besides his commission in the Guards, had of course neither rank nor fortune to offer

her. I believe Lord Trentham was very much censured for the harshness of his conduct, particularly as he had only one other child, the present earl, and his fortune was amply sufficient to have consulted his daughter's happiness, had he chosen to do so."

"How strange!" exclaimed Emily.

"Not strange in his case, for he was a very proud, imperious man, accustomed to implicit obedience, and incapable himself of comprehending what love meant. At last he wished to force Lady Emmeline into a marriage with the Duke of Lisburne, and then she consented to elope, and was privately married by her father's own chaplain, which act of kindness, by the bye, cost him his situation."

"And was she happy afterwards?" interrupted Emily, earnestly.

“I fear not. I scarcely ever saw a runaway match that *was* happy, Emily. Her father not only would never see her, but even carried his resentment so far as not to name her in his will, so that at his death she received no more than the ten thousand pounds which, as a younger child, had been settled on her at her mother’s marriage. This obduracy was rendered doubly painful by the early death of her husband, who was killed at Waterloo, only a few months after the birth of their first child. She has continued to reside on the Continent almost ever since, that she might procure for her son those advantages of education which of course she could not have afforded for him in England.”



“Poor thing !” exclaimed Emily.  
“What a sad history ! Then the present Lord Trentham is Mr. Mandeville’s uncle ?”

“Yes ; but I do not believe there ever has been much cordiality between the families. Lady Emmeline, I believe, fancied that he had not acted quite a brotherly part towards her ; and, added to this, there may have been a feeling of jealousy on the earl’s part with respect to his own heir, who is the very antipodes of Mr. Mandeville in everything. I never saw Lord Errington’ but once, long ago, when he was a mere boy, and then I remember thinking him the most perfectly awkward, unmannered person I had ever beheld.”



“Poor Lady Emmeline,” said Emily, “I fancy I should like to know her very much.”

“She is not generally liked,” said Lady Wrexham. “Her manners are cold and stately to the last degree, but Heaven knows it is not wonderful, if one remembers the sorrows she has had, and the sacrifices she is still compelled to make, which, to a proud spirit like hers, must be very galling. She always appeared to me to feel for nothing on earth but her son, and towards him her affection amounts to positive idolatry, which, indeed, is not very surprising, for his attention to her is quite beautiful, and he is, besides, a person that a mother might well be proud of.”

“You made their acquaintance in Italy, did you not?”

“Yes; Lady Emmeline never went out; but *he* was with us daily; and abroad, you know, one has an opportunity of becoming more intimate in a few weeks than would be possible here in as many months. We seemed quite like old friends before the winter was half over. Indeed, I do not know what we should have done without him at all our parties, for everything seemed to go smoothly when he was there. He was a sad slayer of hearts, carina, so let me warn you—prenez garde à vous!”

“Oh, no fear,” said Emily, laughing.  
“After my *escapade* of this morning, and with Mr. Mandeville’s devotion to his

mother, too, of whom I was speaking so disrespectfully, he will not take the trouble to attempt any inroad on my peace of mind, depend upon it."

"Che sarà sarà, carina. We shall see. Only I say, prenez garde à vous. He is a dangerous person!"

"And in all these dangers, is it possible that he himself has escaped without a wound?"

"I don't know—I am not sure of that. At one time I used to think he bore a charmed life; but I suspect that before we left Naples—"

Lady Wrexham was interrupted by a gentle tap at the box-door, which, as the two ladies simultaneously turned their heads, was opened by their cousin, Charles Grenville of the Guards. It would not have

been very easy to define why the rose in Emily's cheek deepened to the very hue so much deprecated by her mother, when she perceived that Mr. Mandeville was behind him, for by no possibility could he have heard a single word of the low-toned conversation that had just passed; neither could she herself have explained the cause of her disappointment, when her cousin, whose first entrance had given him the privilege of choosing his own position, placed himself in the chair beside her, leaving Mr. Mandeville, as a matter of course, to take the corresponding seat near Lady Wrexham. Emily was very fond of her cousin, and he was very fond of her; and there had always been a brotherly and sisterly intercourse between the families, which had of course banished all restraint between them. More-

over, Miss Morton, like most girls brought up in her own circle, was by no means unaccustomed to the world, though she had nominally only made her *début* that morning, yet still on this evening she felt embarrassed as her Cousin Charles began talking to her in his own light way, without very well knowing why. Her usual playful answers to his sallies of wit were not forthcoming, and though she felt very much provoked with herself, and tolerably certain that he must observe the change in her manner, and would certainly quiz her unmercifully for it afterwards, yet still every effort to mend matters only seemed to make them worse. The truth was, that Emily was singularly indisposed to exhibit to the strange eyes, which she *felt* were just then fixed on her, the degree of intimacy which

had always subsisted between herself and her hair-brained cousin, and the symptoms of which were, as she thought, on the present occasion, vastly increased by the low tone wherein, with due deference to decorum, his conversation was carried on. \*

“What *are* you thinking of, Emily?” whispered he. “I am certain you are in love, for I never saw you so silent before.”

“I believe I have been thinking more of Grisi and Mario than of anything else to-night, Charles,” said she, smiling, and colouring a little.

“Whoever dreams of coming to the opera to think of Grisi and Mario?”

“*I* do, most certainly,” said Emily, looking up with much animation, in vindication of her good taste.

“Nonsense! People come to the opera to

see and be seen. You came to-night for no other purpose than to show the world what a miracle of beauty they had gained."

"Oh, hush, Charles," whispered Emily, with a look which seemed to implore for silence.

"I wish you would always wear that head-dress, Emmy. It is so becoming; I like those long lace things—what do you call them?—lappits, is it not?"

"Yes; now do let me listen to the music," said she, in a more audible tone, as the curtain, drawing up, gave her an excuse for turning from him, and fixing her attention once more on the stage.

Lady Wrexham and Mrs. Mandeville had, in the meantime, been conversing in the same light tone as before, but



their voices likewise ceased as the opera recommenced, for the little beauty was beginning to feel somewhat fatigued with the prolonged exertion of the day ; and Mr. Mandeville was too enthusiastic a lover of music not to profit very gladly by the unusual spell of silence which had enchained her. Miss Morton was thus left during the whole of the next act to the undisturbed enjoyment of the scene before her. Save for an occasional ejaculation of delight to Lady Wrexham, at some particularly beautiful passage, she never ventured to turn her head from the stage, from a dread of the renewal of her cousin's raillery ; and thus it was not till the curtain fell again, leaving her no further excuse for retaining her position, that on looking



round she perceived he had quitted the box, and that Mr. Mandeville had taken possession of the vacant seat behind her.

“You are a connoisseur in music, I should think,” said he, referring to the evident interest and delight with which she had been listening.

“Not in the least,” said Emily, in her own elegant, unembarrassed manner; “but I am passionately fond of it.”

“You sing, I daresay?”

“Yes.”

“Indeed she does, and very beautifully,” subjoined Lady Wrexham, with good-natured earnestness. “Now don’t contradict me, Emmy, for it is all true. Garcia himself told me so; and I imagine that he is a better judge than any of us.”

"People are never fair judges of their own performance," observed Mr. Mandeville, with a smile. "Have you any of the music from Verdi's new opera?" inquired he; "it is very beautiful."

"I do not remember to have met with it."

"Probably not. I believe it has not yet found its way into England. I brought the whole opera with me from Italy. If you will permit me, I will send it for you to look over."

"You are very kind," said Emily, scarcely knowing whether she should say "Yes" or "No."

"And perhaps," added he, "if you should find anything you particularly admire, I may hope to hear you sing it."

“You would scarcely recognise the music, I fear, from my singing, after having been accustomed to listen to it in Italy,” said Emily, alarmed at the ordeal through which she was expected to pass, for she had heard from Lady Wrexham of Mandeville’s fastidious taste and correct judgment. “Nevertheless, if you are content to listen to me, *faute de mieux*—”

“Quite content, and with many thanks ;” and as Mr. Mandeville ceased speaking, he drew back a moment and looked round, for the door had again opened, giving entrance to Sir William Wrexham and Captain Grenville ; but the same moment the curtain drawing up, Emily’s attention was again directed towards the stage, but she did not find

it necessary this time to change her position as before, for Mr. Mandeville appeared as well disposed to listen to the music as herself. There was scarcely a beautiful passage, indeed, which did not elicit from him a whispered word of admiration, for he had retained his seat near Emily, and to which she in the same tone did not assent; but, further than this, the enjoyment in which they both seemed to participate suffered little interruption. Lady Wrexham was very tired; Sir William rarely talked at the opera, nor was he, at all events, exactly the sort of person that Charles Grenville would have selected for a *conversazione* on such an occasion, and Emily's gay cousin was therefore compelled, sorely against his will.

to content himself with the silent exercise of Lady Wrexham's discarded opera-glass.

"Do you wish to stay for the ballet, Emily?" said her ladyship, as the falling of the curtain closed the miseries of Norma.

"By no means, if you are tired, dear."

"I *am* very tired, I own," and Lady Wrexham's paleness proved the truth of what she said. "Are not you?"

"Not in the least," said Emily, who had perfectly recovered her animated, unembarrassed manner. "But let us go, by all means, or you will knock yourself up for to-morrow."

"To-morrow—ah, true. Mr. Mandeville, do you go to Lady Courtney's breakfast to-morrow?" inquired Lady

Wrexham, as she folded her magnificent Cashmere round her.

“Alas, no. I did not arrive in time to procure an invitation; and I fear it is now too late.”

“Oh! by no means. You shall go under the shadow of my wing. Call on me at one, to-morrow, and we will arrange all about it.” And while Sir William went in search of the carriage, she passed out of the box, leaning on the arm of Charles Grenville, while Mr. Mandeville once more, as a matter of course, offered his to Miss Morton.

“Shall you be at Lady Courtney’s to-morrow?” he inquired, as they descended the stair together.

“Oh, yes; I hope so.”

“Buona notte,” said Lady Wrexham, as

the carriage-door closed on herself and Emily.

“Buona notte, buona notte, amato bene,” murmured Mr. Mandeville, at the same time humming the air, but in a tone inaudible, save to himself, for the carriage had dashed off towards Portland Place; while, passing his arm through that of Captain Grenville, the two young men turned into St. James’s Street, toward their own lodgings.

## CHAPTER VII.

LADY COURTNEY'S *déjeuner dansant*, at her ladyship's beautiful villa in the Regent's Park, was to be a very elaborate affair—quite as elaborate as the most accomplished *artistes* and the most profuse expenditure could make it. There were to be water-works in the morning, and fireworks at night; a concert out of doors, and a ball within; a supper, comprising all the deli-



cacies in and out of season, with the finest wines money could procure; and to crown all, as her ladyship herself expressed it, "lots of fine people to eat 'em."

Never had there been such a hubbub on the usually quiet road which led to "The Pavilion," the name by which her ladyship chose to distinguish her newly-made and very beautiful purchase; never had there been so great a commotion in the establishment of Mr. Gunter and his coadjutors, to whose superior skill and knowledge Lady Courtney, aware of her own inexperience in such matters, had wisely confided the management of the whole affair, merely stipulating that no expense should be spared (a part of the agreement which she afterwards learned might, with some advantage, have been omitted) to

render everything as elegant and *distingué* as possible. This particular *fête* constituted, in fact, a very important crisis in her ladyship's destiny.

It was the "to be," or "not to be," of her enrolment on the admitted list of fashionable *fête*-givers; and being, besides, her first appearance on so large a scale, in the capacity of hostess, on the London stage, the flutter of agitation, by which the poor lady was rendered considerably more uncomfortable than she had ever been before in the whole course of her existence, during the time the preparations were going on, may very readily be conceived. That Lady Courtney *should* feel somewhat fluttered at the self-imposed ordeal through which she was about to pass, was not indeed surprising, considering how very

recent was her translation to the new and imposing world of London, for, up to the period in question, her life had been passed in the purlieus of her husband's manufactory at Birmingham, and in the sole occupation of displaying to the little great world, of which she was the queen, the enormous wealth which his industry had there amassed. The importance derivable from this source had been considerably augmented some years previously by the acquisition of knighthood conferred on the presentation of an address to royalty; and, to crown all, the knight's enormous riches and popularity had carried everything at the last election, and Lady Courtney had the supreme satisfaction, not only of beholding M.P. attached to his name, but herself of dispensing franks right and

left to all who chose to ask for them.

It followed, as a matter of course, that Sir John must attend his duties in Parliament; and, as a matter of course, Lady Courtney went up to London for two successive seasons, and was presented at Court; but nothing very remarkable came of it, till the approach of the third, when sundry rumours began to be afloat concerning the member's frequent fits of the gout, and his consequent determination to resign his seat. Then some of the leading men in the county recollected, for the first time, that it might be as well, in consideration of the election impending, to secure the well-known enormous influence of the sitting member by any little harmless civilities in their power. Cards were accordingly left

for Sir John and Lady Courtney in due form ; a dinner was given for the nonce, and Lady Courtney had not only the inexpressible delight of finding herself, for the first time in her life, seated at the same table with five live lords, and three live ladies, but also of perceiving that the magnificence of her diamonds, and the brilliancy of the cherry-coloured velvet dress she had selected expressly to do honour to the occasion, far exceeded that of any one of the said ladies who had been invited to meet her.

“ Well, Sir John,” said her ladyship, drawing up her portly person with an air of increased dignity, as she sat sipping her coffee on the following morning in the luxurious breakfast-room at the Pavilion, “ no one shall ever say in my presence again

that Lady Caroline Douglas is *high*. I'm sure I never in my life saw anyone more affable and condescending."

"Why, what did you expect to find her, Lady Courtney? Did you think she would be rude to us in her own house?"

"Lord, Sir John, I don't know. Those great people do give themselves such airs sometimes; and, you know, she's a duke's daughter."

"So much the more likely to know what good manners are," answered the knight, who was as remarkable for his plain good sense as for the honour and honesty so peculiarly the characteristics of that most noble class—our English merchants. Sir John had, in fact, done but one foolish thing in his life, he had married a very kind-hearted, but superlatively silly wife,

because she had a pretty face, and a sore trial of temper it had been to him.

“Those great people never give themselves airs, Lady Courtney,” continued he; “it is only upstarts who do.”

Lady Courtney fidgeted in her chair. She did not very well understand Sir John’s reasoning, and therefore she said nothing. Lords were lords, and ladies were ladies, all the world over, she thought, and lords and ladies must necessarily be great people.

“Very true, Sir John,” replied she. “Then there’s Sir Charles, what a delightful, elegant man *he* is, too!”

“Sir Charles appears a very sensible, straightforward man,” replied the knight. “I have no doubt he will be a useful member in the House at some future time.”



“That seemed a very lively little lady by whom you were seated, Sir John,” continued the lady, as she replenished her cup, alluding to Lady Wrexham, who had been invited by the hostess as a most efficient personage in assisting her to conquer the difficulties of the duty-dinner, and who had done her part to perfection. “Don’t you think she’s something like our Polly?”

If Lady Wrexham could only have heard the comparison—and have seen her prototype!

Sir John gave a sniff, but said nothing. ’

“How plainly she was dressed! Nothing better than a muslin gown, I declare. How dreadful it must be for people who are obliged to mix in the world to be poor, Sir John.”



“It must, indeed,” replied the knight, whose thoughts were at that moment wholly occupied with a reinforcement of buttered toast which had just made its appearance.

“Don’t you think, Sir John, that we ought to invite Sir Charles and Lady Caroline to dinner in return?” pursued the lady.

“Certainly, if you wish it, my dear.”

“You know we owe the Thompsons and the Smiths a dinner, and I am sure they would like very much to meet—”

“No, no, Lady Courtney,” interrupted the knight, as he pushed his now empty plate from him. “That will not do. If you ask these great people, you must ask them properly. We cannot have the Smiths and Thompsons the same day.”

“La! why not, Sir John? I was thinking it would do vastly well; for Mrs. Smith would then have an opportunity of asking them to her ball. One may as well be civil, you know.”

“Pshaw!” said Sir John, impatiently.

“However, if you like it better, my dear,” she continued, perceiving her lord vouchsafed no assent to the proposed arrangement, “I can ask just the same party we met yesterday. They have all left their cards, you know. Only I thought, as it is their business to ask us first—”

“No matter; if you are determined to invite Sir Charles and Lady Caroline, ask the rest, by all means,” and Sir John ended the discussion by seizing one of the numerous papers lying ready for his inspection, while his lady sailed out of the room to indite,

without delay, the various invitations to the new lords and ladies of her acquaintance, whose several addresses, as she laid them in single file before her, and still more as she deposited each separately on the silver salver held out by the footman to receive them, reading, in a sonorous voice, for his especial benefit, the style and title of each as it came, were certainly very dazzling and delightful to the vision of the writer.

“*Must* we go, Charles?” said Lady Caroline Douglas to her husband, as, after opening the profusely gilt envelope, and reading its enclosure, she handed it to him. “I really think I have done very handsomely by you, in having these people here, and now the least you can do is to make me the amende honorable—I may write an excuse, may I not?”

“Not for the world,” answered Sir Charles. “You must really oblige me in this, Caroline; you see, they have sent us heaven knows how long an invitation, so that there is no saying we are engaged without the risk of incurring that large lady’s displeasure, which,” added he, “to speak seriously, I should really be sorry for, for I suspect that a general election is more nearly at hand than most people are aware of.”

Lady Caroline sighed. “If it must be so, it must then, I suppose,” said she, looking very doleful. “But surely, Charles, you do not mean to say that we must keep up a regular visiting acquaintance with these people? Only conceive the people we shall meet there.”

“I suspect you will meet the very

same party we had here yesterday," said her husband. "You know we all left our cards the same day. At all events, it will be but the penance of a few hours."

"If it must be, it must then," replied Lady Caroline, with the resignation of a martyr, as she turned to her writing table and penned the required acceptance.

"I really think I was wrong not to make conditions," said she, laughing, when the note was sealed and dispatched. "This act of self-immolation positively deserves some recompense."

"It does, indeed, Caroline; I am fully aware of it," answered her husband, in the same strain. "But surely it will be sufficient recompense when

you see me by your exertions raised to the dignity of an M.P., like Sir William Courtney, for instance."

"Oh, prithee, let there be no likeness between you of any sort," said she, smiling at the idea of any possible resemblance between the knight of Birmingham and her own elegant husband. "I should say, Charles, that if we are to have all these horrors, '*le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*.' However," continued she, "I know how much you wish to get into Parliament, and therefore, till the election which you say is so near is past, I am ready to brave all sorts of dangers for you; but after that is over—"

"You shall follow your own will and pleasure absolutely and for ever, Carry,"

interposed Sir Charles, in great good humour, and snatching a kiss from the fair cheek of his wife, he vanished from her presence.

*The* dinner (like many other things in this world) by no means fulfilled Lady Caroline Douglas's evil anticipations. Nothing could have been in better style than the whole entertainment, for Lady Courtney had wisely resigned the entire management of everything to her *maître d'hôtel*, who was an artist of the first class; and as her ladyship had taken care to impress him duly with the importance of his task on that especial day, in consideration of the illustrious guests who were to grace her table, he seemed to have considered it as due to his own reputa-



tion, no less than to hers, that everything should be conducted in the most approved style of elegance. By Lady Caroline's own dexterous management, too, the party was, as Sir Charles had prognosticated, the very same as that which had met her at her own table, a few weeks before, so that, what with these two redeeming points, the unobtrusive manners of the host, and the perfect good-humour and amusing qualities of the hostess, the whole party quitted the Pavilion with feelings of far greater complacency than could possibly have been expected. Meanwhile, the immediate prospect of an election seemed for the present to be fading away, thus giving opportunity for the interchange of sundry little civilities, such as the leaving



of a card, or a bow of recognition in the Park, where Lady Courtney failed not daily to display herself and her magnificent equipage, or an occasional ticket for Almack's, or anything else equally harmless. In short, things progressed so favourably, that Lady Courtney for the first time discovered London to be a perfect paradise; and it was in the midst of all this sublimity of happiness that a lazy little devil, in the form of one of the before-named Miss Smiths, put into her ladyships head the delightful idea of a *fête* at the Pavilion, similar to that which had lately been given at an adjoining villa by Lord Somebody, the details of which had reached her through an own maid, who was own cousin to an own man of his lordship himself.

The only difficulty seemed the impossibility of gathering together a sufficient number of sufficiently important personages to make the affair go off with the desired *éclat*; but here the remembrance of her newly-acquired friends, and of their great kindness and affability on all occasions, came opportunely to Lady Courtney's aid, and without permitting herself to be at all daunted by the boldness of such a proceeding, she set out forthwith, in the innocence of her heart, to consult "her friend, Lady Caroline Douglas," on the subject, to ask her co-operation, and to offer *carte blanche*, more especially on the score of invitations in return.

Now all this was, as may readily be believed, a great deal more than either Sir Charles or his lady had bargained for. To

be kind and affable, and so forth, all in a quiet way, in consideration of the votes expectant, was one thing, but to stand sponsors for the result of an undertaking, such as that proposed, was a sacrifice to circumstances for which neither was at all prepared.

“You really have got us into a sad scrape, Charles,” said Lady Caroline to her husband, as, after having dismissed Lady Courtney with a temporising answer, she sought him in his library, to make known the conversation that had just passed. “What on earth shall I do?”

“Upon my word, I scarcely know, Caroline,” answered he, rising, and placing himself *à l’Anglaise*, with his hands behind him, on the rug, forgetting it was May. “It is a deuced bore, certainly.”

“It is very easy to refuse it. I must make the best excuse I can,” said Lady Caroline, looking very much vexed, and both stood for a minute or two silently musing on the means of extrication from the dilemma in which they found themselves placed.

“I see no way of getting out of it, however,” continued Sir Charles, with ready submission to circumstances, for the indulgence of his favourite mania (as is the case with all selfish people) reigned paramount; “and, after all, perhaps it does not much signify. Every one knows perfectly well the origin of our acquaintance; and, as you say, she has given you *carte blanche* to invite whom you please, depend upon it, every one will be very much obliged to you, and very glad to go, particularly

as they can do so without compromising themselves in the least. I have no doubt the thing will be very well got up."

"Oh, I daresay it will," replied Lady Caroline, who, her interest in the business not being quite so strong as her husband's, could not so immediately reconcile herself to her misfortunes. "But what will become of us in the midst of the inundation from Birmingham, which will inevitably be brought *exprès* to witness her ladyship's magnificence, and every individual of which will, of course, pass as my *protégé* on the occasion."

"Think of all the smiles and civil speeches I shall have an opportunity of dispensing to my future constituents, Caroline," said Sir Charles, laughing at the rueful expression of her countenance. "Suppose you

go and consult Lady Wrexham concerning this unexpected *coup de tonnerre*. She will suggest some means of turning it into a pleasant adventure, if anyone can."

And Lady Caroline, who had been already prepared to go out, and whose carriage was actually at the door when the unlucky visitor was announced, set off instantly, though in no very happy mood, to follow up her husband's suggestion.

As he had surmised, Lady Wrexham *did* turn the whole affair into a pleasant adventure, for she was entirely of Sir Charles's way of thinking, that everybody (of their own particular clique was of course implied, and that *did* comprise "everybody" in London) would hold himself infinitely obliged to Lady Caroline for procuring them a very

brilliant entertainment at the small cost of a card thrust furtively in at the Pavilion on the day after, for of course no one would conceive himself at all obliged to keep up any further acquaintance with the lady of the feast than was perfectly convenient or agreeable. As to the dreaded inundation from Birmingham, *that*, as Lady Wrexham suggested, could very easily be obviated by assuming, in the most extended sense, the right of patronage, which Lady Courtney herself had been the first to offer, and in conformity with which it was proposed that the whole of the invitations, with a reservation of twenty for the lady's own especial friends, should be sent to the "lady patronesses," to be filled up absolutely at their will and pleasure. Fortunately, the permitted twenty, with an



additional dozen, who were surreptitiously added to the number at the suggestion of the before-named Miss Smith, were sufficient for the *very* particular friends who happened just then to be in London ; so that, of the three hundred guests who were invited on the occasion, by far the larger number was really composed of the very *élite* of London society. A few there were, indeed, of the ultra stiff-backed generation, who could not be persuaded to grace the *fête* with their *names*, for, in most cases, of grace their *presence* could have added none ; but expectation and curiosity were too busy, and Lady Caroline Douglas and Lady Wrexham too powerful for the example to be generally followed. Thus, Lady Courtney's gratitude to her "two dear friends" knew no bounds, for not only



had they suggested various improvements in the order of things, which were to render the *fête* at the Pavilion more perfect than any *fête* that had ever gone before, but they had likewise performed the far more acceptable task of procuring for her the "lots of fine people" who were to behold them.

## CHAPTER VIII.

NOTHING could be more lovely than the eventful day—nothing more perfect than the arrangements. In conformity with Lady Courtney's express orders, no expense had been spared; and what with the bright sunshine, the beauty of the gardens, the splendour of the mansion, and the decorations which had been superadded to it for the occasion, the scene nearly resembled

fairy-land as can well be imagined. The hostess herself had taken her station in a temporary pavilion attached to the front of the house, and communicating with the ball-room, the principal entrance to both being through a conservatory, which was now as lovely as the most perfect beauty and fragrance could make it, and which, at night, was to be still further enlivened by a brilliant illumination. There Lady Courtney was prepared to receive her guests, arrayed in a voluminous dress of bright amber-coloured satin, with a white hat and paradise plume to correspond, the whole being set off with as many of her ladyship's diamonds as could conveniently be employed, considering that her attire was in some sort necessarily that which is usually appropriated to the morn-

ing. Sir John was by her side, not altogether displeased at what was going on, but looking a little cross, and a little fidgety, for sundry symptoms of impending gout had rather inopportunately made their appearance; while, running about hither and thither, now examining this thing, and now exclaiming at that, was a young lady of some fifteen years, arrayed in bright pink, the only daughter of Sir John's only brother, and the destined heiress of her uncle's vast possessions, who had arrived in London for the first time three days previously.

Accustomed to the most unrestrained freedom of speech and action, Miss Polly (for it was she) gave vent to her wonder, curiosity, and delight in scampering through the whole suite of apartments; and it would be difficult to tell to what pitch of extra-

vagance the exuberance of her feelings might have carried her, had not her attention been happily directed to other matters, for the guests were now beginning to arrive; indeed the greater part of mine hostess's "very particular friends" had already made their appearance, partly from a determination not to lose a single moment of the day's enjoyment, and partly that they might be present to witness the arrival of all the "fine folks."

Thus Lady Courtney's labours of rising up and sitting down, and of adjusting the voluminous folds of her amber satin, of repeating the same words of welcome, and the same shaking of hands (for her ladyship shook hands with every individual of every fresh party that arrived) were already beginning to be somewhat fatiguing, when the

Douglas party, accompanied by Sir William and Lady Wrexham, all of whom had engaged to come early, were announced.

When the proper salutations on both sides were over, Lady Wrexham proceeded to present Mr. Mandeville, and Lady Caroline went through the same ceremony with the gentlemen of her immediate suite. While this was going forward, the little lady in pink took advantage of so favourable an opportunity to steal to the side of her aunt, and there, sheltered by the elaborate amber drapery, to have a "good look" at the whole party, with whose various supposed qualities and characteristics her sharp ears, and still sharper wits, had, thanks to Lady Courtney's volubility, during the last three days, made her perfectly acquainted. Lady Wrexham happened to be standing nearer

to her than any of the rest; and as her sunny countenance and style of dress seemed to hold forth the best prospect of intimacy, Miss Polly, after scrutinizing her from head to foot with a glance from which curiosity had banished every trace of shyness, ventured to inquire :—

“What is your name? Are you a *lady*, too?”

“My name is Lady Wrexham,” answered she, with one of her own good-humoured smiles.

“Oh—h—h—!” ejaculated the child, drawing out the monosyllable, and her own countenance at the same time, with its utmost power of elongation.

“You have heard of me before, then?” said Lady Wrexham, under cover of the hand-shakings and salutations which were

still going on, and much amused at the anticipation of what was coming.

“Yes, I have heard a great deal about you,” answered Polly, encouraged into further intimacy by the sweetness of manner of her new acquaintance. “My aunt likes you very much, indeed; and she will be very kind to you too, I know that.”

“Indeed!—what makes you think so?” inquired Lady Wrexham, smiling with increased curiosity.

The young lady was silent for a moment, restrained by some vague feeling, but either the love of mischief or the love of talking prevailed.

“Because—because,” said she, in a very audible whisper, “aunt is very kind to poor people.”

This unlucky speech, which distinctly



reached the ears of Lady Courtney, was followed by a twitch of the pink dress, which, though meant to be concealed by her own flowing drapery, was so violent as well nigh to have parted body and soul; while the poor lady's cheeks, which had before been somewhat too blooming for strict beauty (for the day was hot, and her dress was hot, and the occasion was flurrying) became in an instant of the colour of the peony.

“Now don't — I hate to be pulled about so,” exclaimed the spoiled child, aloud, at the same time jerking herself away from the point of attack, and setting herself to rights again, for she was too much disturbed at the discomfiture of the new pink dress to care for the presence in which she stood.

Sir John took a large pinch of snuff (it was his way when he was vexed), but said nothing; Lady Caroline gave something between a sigh and a groan; the rest of the party moved on, to conceal the smile which was irrepressible, and Lady Wrexham was about to follow, when again the little lady in pink detained her.

“Oh, my! what a beauty!” exclaimed she, seizing the embroidered handkerchief which Lady Wrexham carried in her hand.

“Polly, I must positively send you to bed, if you can’t behave yourself,” interposed Lady Courtney, in a tremulous whisper, for she was thoroughly vexed at this commencement of the labours of the day; and the lace having been at last released from the gripe of the young lady (whom at

that moment she wished back at Birmingham again), the party passed on, to make room for fresh arrivals, which were now at every moment pouring in.

This little incident was, however, the concluding misfortune of the day; and, indeed, had it been possible for Miss Polly to fix her attention, during the remainder of it, on any one person or thing sufficiently to indulge in any more freaks of a similar nature, her delinquency could without difficulty have been concealed beneath the din and bustle which now prevailed throughout the whole domain. But no further maladventure occurred to ruffle the full-blown satisfaction of the lady of the feast, or to increase the irritability of her husband; nor was there a single lapse in propriety, to alarm the fine ladyism of Lady Caroline Douglas,

or awaken the mirth of Lady Wrexham. It was one of those prosperous days when everything goes smoothly; and though there was probably the usual number of heartburnings, and disappointed hopes, and broken flirtations common to all such occasions, yet the general expression was one of unequivocal enjoyment.

Owing to some mistake, Mr. Morton's carriage did not fall into the file for nearly an hour after those of Lady Wrexham and her party, so that, by the time that he and Mrs. Morton, with his son and daughter, passed from the reception pavilion into the gardens beyond, they were already filled with gay-looking groups, scattered hither and thither as chance or inclination might lead them.

As the Mortons were acquainted with

at least two-thirds of the guests assembled, and as the leaders of the party had no especial reason for seeking out any one in particular, they went loitering on, now stopping to speak to one, and now discussing with another the *jets d'eau*, or the flowery bowers, or the general beauty of the scene altogether; and in this manner they encountered in turn almost all those whose curiosity, like their own, was still sending them indiscriminately from one point of attraction to the other. To almost every group was attached one or more of the numerous cavaliers who were so fortunate as to find themselves on the list of the "Lady Patronesses;" and as Mr. Morton was to the greater number of them personally

known as a "capital dinner" giver, as the family were, besides, really popular, and Miss Morton was undeniably very beautiful, Emily found herself in a very short space of time encumbered with considerably more engagements for the ball of the evening than she very well knew how to remember.

Now, had this been Emily's *very* first ball, perhaps the certainty of the enjoyment before her might, for the moment, have obliterated the recollection of everything else; but she had been accustomed to something of the same sort at the numerous children's balls of the many years since her tiny feet had first been able to compass the intricacies of a single figure; and, consequently, she received it entirely as a

matter of course, and without feeling herself in the least flattered by the homage thus profusely flung at her feet.

The fact was, that Emily had (quite unconsciously to herself), amid the anticipations of that delightful day, looked forward to the meeting with Lady Wrexham, and those by whom she might chance to be accompanied, as the brightest spot in its varied enjoyments. The delay which had caused the Morton party to arrive so late at the scene of festivity had not tended to diminish the preponderance of the ruling idea; so that Emily, though exceedingly delighted with the gay and beautiful scene around her, still found something wanting, without very well knowing what it was, and though very well



pleased at the prospect held forth by the multiplicity of her evening engagements (for she was an enthusiastic lover of dancing), would yet very willingly have held some of them in reservation, for the benefit of any other candidate for her favour who might chance to present himself.

Perhaps, to speak still more plainly, Emily Morton's thoughts had, during the whole morning, been dwelling on the possibility of meeting Mr. Mandeville at Lady Courtney's breakfast, and on the probability of his asking her to dance there, though, as we have said, the idea was so mixed up with all her other pleasurable anticipations that she was herself wholly unconscious of it. Neither would it have appeared at all extraordinary, even had it



been otherwise; for though they had, as we have seen, met but twice, scarcely could she be said to regard Mr. Mandeville in the light of a stranger. From Lady Wrexham she had so frequently heard a repetition of his agreeable qualities, of his numerous acquirements, of his general popularity, that she had long connected the idea of Mr. Mandeville with that of every possible attraction; and it is therefore scarcely surprising that his peculiarly distinguished appearance and fascination of manner should have completed the picture which her fancy had conjured up. Not that Mandeville was, in the common acceptation of the term, an accomplished man. It was true, he spoke several of the continental languages with fluency, and his own with an elegance

which, added to the charm of a most melodious voice, lent a peculiar grace to everything he said; but though endowed with a refined taste and judgment, which enabled him to admire and appreciate excellence in others, he himself could neither play, nor sing, nor draw. He was not, in fact, what the world calls an accomplished man—perhaps he might have been both less agreeable and less popular had he been so.

Very accomplished people—very accomplished men, particularly—are rarely either very agreeable or very popular, which appears a contradiction, but it is nevertheless true. But it is in themselves, and not in their accomplishments, that the fault lies when it is so. This is more especially the case with regard to music, which may

be made either the most selfish or the most *unselfish* of all acquirements. Woe to the fireside where a fiddlestick reigns paramount! Then comes the love of display—the desire to shine. Adulation abroad begets selfishness at home, and the sweetest sounds are carried away to the market where the richest harvest of applause is to be gathered.

I do not think that the *principle* on which every accomplishment should be based, more especially by women, is ever sufficiently inculcated. We can never know too much, never have too many acquirements, *but let us learn nothing with a view to display*. It is that very love of display that has fostered the present ungraceful style of—no, not music—it is *not* music—the present railway fashion of flying

over the instrument, which is very wonderful, no doubt, but, for my part, I could never discover either pleasure or advantage in it. We cease to please when we strive only to astonish; people find out that we are labouring for our own vanity, not for their gratification. It should never be lost sight of, that the best use to which talent can be appropriated is to promote the enjoyment of others, not in the world's wide circle, and for the world's applause, but in the quiet home, and amid the loving few, with whom truth takes the place of adulation, and the heart's homage alone responds to our most brilliant efforts. These are the garlands which, when flung on the dull stream of life, will send forth the richest perfume to her who gathers them.

It was not, then, in showy accomplish-

ments, not even in the superiority of his mental cultivation, that lay concealed the secret of Mandeville's popularity. It was derived from a peculiar tact and fascination of manner, as natural to himself as it would have been impossible of imitation by others. There was in his manner toward the softer sex (for it was over them that his influence was most peculiarly observable), a desire to please, an appearance of devotion, which could scarcely fail to captivate the imagination. And yet there was no apparent effort or premeditation in anything he did. Hearts were lost, it is true; but no one ever accused Mr. Mandeville of having designedly stolen them. Had he been a flirt or a jilt, it might have been otherwise; but to all appearance he was neither. His attentions were too general to bring him,

strictly speaking, under the denomination of a flirt. He had never, for a single evening, been observed to devote himself exclusively to any one of the many who would so willingly have received his homage. Whether he himself had escaped with a whole heart, in the midst of so many dangers, was an enigma which no one had ever attempted to solve. Certain rumours there had been, as Lady Wrexham had hinted, during the winter at Naples; but every one was aware that to these no certainty could be attached. All that she knew, or just then cared to know, was, that Mr. Mandeville was again in England, as agreeable and as fascinating as ever.

All this had been repeated to Emily Morton over and over again; what then so natural as that she should feel flattered

by the evident admiration, and desirous of the favourable opinion, of one whom all the world delighted to honour—one, too, whose superior taste and judgment in all things were so universally admitted?

A time which appeared to Emily very long (though it did not in reality exceed three-quarters of an hour) had passed away, during which the Grenvilles, with Lady Allington, and one or two more, had joined the Morton party, when a mimic gun, from a little vessel moored on a piece of water at the other extremity of the domain, gave notice that the concert was about to commence. The little craft, which was profusely decorated, so as to present a similitude of the barge of Cleopatra, was destined to receive the performers, who, in appropriate costumes, and with Grisi at their head, at-



tired as the Egyptian Queen, were at a given signal to ascend the deck from a temporary building on the shore, within which they had hitherto been concealed. From all directions groups were seen hurrying towards the scene, for the music of the procession was already making itself heard; and then, as they reached the water's edge, the Morton party, for the first time, encountered that of Sir Charles and Lady Douglas, with the Wrexhams, Mr. Mandeville, the hostess herself, and a few more. All became very naturally grouped together; but very little passed beyond a silent recognition, for the full rich notes of the Queen of Song had hushed every other sound, while the general attention was completely riveted by the mimic scene that was enacting.



“We all thought you lost, carina,” said Lady Wrexham, in an under tone, when a momentary pause in the music admitted of her speaking. “How is it that you are so late? Here has Mr. Mandeville been waiting for the last hour to engage you for the first valse, on the strength of all the fine things I have been saying about you.”

Emily was about to reply, when she heard her name mentioned by a voice behind her. “Not now, any other time will do as well,” were the words which reached her; but they were apparently unheeded by the first speaker, for again her name was repeated, and on turning round she perceived Lady Courtney standing close beside her, leaning on the arm of a stranger, the expression of whose countenance was

at the moment clouded, or she fancied so, by a shade of vexation at the ill-timed manner in which his request for a presentation to Miss Morton had been followed up. But Lady Courtney was unendowed with those fine perceptions which ever bring such a world of unimaginable agony to their possessor. Deaf to the sweet sounds she was interrupting, unobservant of the discomposure visible on the countenances of several of the group around her, she resolutely persevered, and not only in due form went through the presentation of Lord Errington to Miss Morton, and Miss Morton to Lord Errington, but also, after saying in a tolerably audible voice, "Well, now I shall leave you to take care of the young lady," withdrew her arm from that of her companion, and, moving away, left him to

prosecute the acquaintance after his own fashion.

Any one as well acquainted as Lady Wrexham, or even Emily herself, with the family history of Mr. Mandeville, would readily have divined the feeling with which he thus found himself suddenly, and for the first time, in the presence of his cousin, Lord Errington, and placed, as it were, in direct juxtaposition with him. His first impulse was to turn quickly round, as he heard the name pronounced, and to measure the figure before him from head to foot with a glance, the result of which, to judge by the expression of his countenance, was anything but satisfactory ; and then, as the colloquy we have recorded went on, to turn away again with feelings as nearly akin to aversion as possible.

Lady Wrexham saw it all, but, as may be supposed, without comment; and, indeed, the music furnished to more than one of the party a very welcome pretext for withdrawing their attention from each other.

Lord Errington, meanwhile, continued standing where Lady Courtney had left him, though with no apparent design of taking advantage of his position to prosecute his acquaintance with Miss Morton, for he did not address to her a single word, though the music had now ended; and Lady Wrexham, in the hope of breaking the spell which appeared to have fallen on the whole party, was running on in her own light strain. But the task was beyond the invention even of her fertile brain. Mandeville, though he answered, when spoken to, with the same bland smile as before,

was evidently chafed at the awkwardness of this public meeting with his cousin, to whom he was a perfect stranger. Lord Errington's vicinity had placed an effectual bar against his approach to Miss Morton, while Emily, at the same time, was as much vexed as her gentle nature would admit of. It was one of those *contretemps* which, in all such scenes of gaiety, are so frequent; for it is an egregious mistake to suppose that places of festivity must necessarily be places of enjoyment. To complete the disappointment of that day, the sonorous sound of the gong, which announced that the banquet was ready, now made itself heard; and again, by one of those strange chances to which even the most beautiful and the most admired are liable, Emily, on looking round, perceived that, in-

stead of the numerous cavaliers who usually swelled her train, Lord Errington alone was sufficiently near to claim the privilege of being her cavalier on the occasion. Startled into something like animation, he proffered his arm for Miss Morton's acceptance. Poor Emily cast one glance of despair at Lady Wrexham. She heard the voices of Captain Seymour, Lord Thomas Grantham, of her merry cousin, Charles, all approaching in the group behind her. She knew that any one of them would very willingly have constituted himself her cavalier, during the process of the *déjeûner*, which would occupy the next hour and a half at least, and anyone would have been preferred to the silent automaton beside her ; but what could she do ?

“Thank you ;—I believe I must join

mamma," said she, turning in despair from the proffered arm, to take refuge under Mrs. Morton's chaperonage. But Emily was a bad diplomatist, and her mother was exactly the reverse. Mrs. Morton was too well pleased at seeing her daughter leaning on the arm of the future Earl of Trentham, to disarrange the order of march ; she merely replied, therefore, " I am here, my love, go on," and though Lord Errington's services were this time proffered quite as silently, and somewhat more stiffly than before, yet it was evident there was no escape from them.

For so long a time as the important business of the banquet might chance to last, Emily must reconcile herself as she best might to the companionship of him who had been described to her by Lady



Wrexham, only the evening before, as the most “un-mannered, awkward creature she had ever beheld.” Whether Lord Errington’s appearance and manners coincided with the description which had been given of them, Emily, from her own personal observation would have found it difficult to say, for scarcely more than a passing word was exchanged between them during the one hour and thirty-five minutes that he was seated beside her. At last, a general move took place; Lord Errington seemed to consider his duties ended; and Emily found herself released from the penance to which she had been subjected.

“Come, carina,” exclaimed Lady Wrexham, who was determined to convert every remaining moment into one of enjoyment, both for herself and others, if she could,



“prithee, let us breathe a little of the fresh air again. I have been almost stifled for the last half-hour ; and as for you, poverina, I observed that you were long since reduced to a state of somnambulism.”

“Something very like it.” said Emily, laughing.

“How *ennuyants* the English *fêtes* are,” exclaimed Lady Wrexham, smothering a yawn, for she was beginning to be very tired. “Mr. Mandeville, pray come and bring our wits to life again, if you can ; mine have positively taken flight among all the wondrous devices for our amusement which have been assembled together ;” and as she spoke, the trio took possession of one of the numerous resting-places which were profusely scattered about.

“This is all certainly very beautiful,”

observed Emily, to whom the present scene presented the added charm of contrast with that she had just quitted.

“Yes; but one gets too much of it,” said Lady Wrexham, languidly. “There is no *fête* in this country at all to be compared in enjoyment with those one has abroad—Italy, for instance.”

“And is not the fault our own, when it is so?” said Mandeville.

“I suppose not; or we should remedy it.”

“Excuse me. When people meet abroad, they go predetermined to see everything *en rose*, merely for the enjoyment of society, and caring comparatively little for those accessories which with us are deemed indispensable. They are, therefore, far less liable to disappointment than we are.”

“And would bear it with a far better grace if it came,” said Lady Wrexham. “The elasticity which makes every thing there seem so bright and sunshiny is never, or very rarely, to be met with in England. How laboured and heavy our *réunions* in this country appear, after the light and airy forms of society on the continent.

“Our own fault, still,” said Mandeville. “Society in this country is a perpetual struggle, wherein the love of display is the first object, and amusement is the second; whereas, abroad, no one ever dreams of the one, and is perpetually dreaming of the other.”

“I do not think so; at least, though amusement may be the first object, yet their *fêtes* are often quite as magnificent as ours.”

“Yes; but not for the sake of display.

It is an accessory with them—a necessity with us; because ostentation has become a fashion here, which few are powerful enough to struggle against. The natural result is, that persons whose means are too moderate to admit of their following the prevailing mode, in nine cases out of ten, prefer giving up society altogether, to encountering the ill-natured criticisms which, the not being able to do like others seldom fails to awaken.”

“But surely no rational person,” said Emily, “could be wounded, still less could he be influenced, by any criticism so unreasonable.”

“No rational person, perhaps,” answered Mandeville, “would *admit* that he could be either wounded or influenced by it, and no doubt there are some minds of so high

an order as entirely to despise what is, in truth, thoroughly contemptible; but by far the larger number, I fear, have not philosophy enough to despise the world's dread laugh, however they may affect to do so. Do you think," continued he, addressing Lady Wrexham, "that there is anyone in London sufficiently powerful to establish such *soirées* as those of our old friend, the Contessa Camaldoli, at Naples?"

"Good gracious! no;—she might live for ever up in her little *quatrième*, and not a soul would ever go near her. She was the most charming little creature you ever saw," she added, turning to Emily; "and, though nearly seventy, the most lively and agreeable companion in the world. But she was very, very poor; and her style of living more simple than anything you can conceive

—and yet how delightful our Wednesday evenings used to be ! ”

“ Delightful, indeed,” said Mandeville, “ though they were utterly devoid of those ‘ means and appliances,’ which in this country are considered indispensable to the smallest *réunion*. ”

“ You appear to have a very contemptible opinion of us all, Mr. Mandeville,” said Emily, smiling.

“ All—indeed, no,” replied he, gazing with an expression of admiration not to be mistaken into the beautiful eyes that were turned towards him. “ I am free from thinking that the rule is without many exceptions,” he continued, after a slight pause; “ but undeniably the general tone of society in England is one of display, and this is one reason why so many are compelled to fly

to the continent, where very moderate means will suffice to place them (so far as external appearance is concerned) on a footing with the highest grades of society."

"I have often," observed Lady Wrexham, "been quite astonished abroad at the facility with which English people fall into the earlier hours and the simple mode of life that one leads there. Things that here are thought impossible there appear perfectly natural. Who, for instance, at Naples, could think of dining at eight o'clock in the evening. Yet here we think ourselves barbarous if we do otherwise."

"Fashion! fashion! what a despotic queen she is!" exclaimed Mandeville, laughing. "I am convinced that, could anyone be found sufficiently bold, and sufficiently powerful, to introduce the good



old hours and the merry old customs of our ancestors, we should all, in a very short time, confess ourselves infinitely obliged to them."

"To be sure we should," exclaimed Lady Wrexham; "provided always, however, that the armour of our ancestors formed neither part nor parcel of the revival. What would become of us if a panoply of steel were superadded to the ponderous shield of reserve behind which we English people are so fond of sheltering ourselves?"

"You are perfectly incorrigible, Caroline," said Emily, laughing. "How I wish Lord Allington were here to listen to you."

"Grazie, carina—so do I, that I might have the satisfaction of bringing him round



to my side of the question at last. There is nothing on earth like an example to demonstrate the truth of an assertion," pursued she, in a whisper, as Charles Grenville, who had approached, was speaking to Mr. Mandeville. "Do you not think that *that*, for instance, of your late cavalier would be perfectly conclusive?"

Emily smiled.

"Perfectly so, indeed, so far as he himself is concerned, but—"

"But what, carina?"

"But everyone is not like him," said Emily, colouring slightly.

"E vero—è vero—Heaven forbid they were," answered Lady Wrexham, in the same low tone.

Very soon afterwards the ball commenced, and from that time Miss Morton's whole

attention was necessarily confined to the dancing-room. Lady Wrexham had apparently vanished, for she saw no more either of her or of Mandeville during the remainder of the evening. How it was, Emily herself would have found it difficult to say, but it is certain that, though an enthusiastic lover of dancing, though, moreover, Lady Courtney's *fête* had failed in none of the contrivances which might be supposed to minister to enjoyment, yet it was with a feeling very like disappointment at the result of that day's anticipations, that she threw herself into the corner of the carriage on her return home.

## CHAPTER IX.

LORD ERRINGTON drove the next day to Portland Place, to leave his card, in an equipage which might have rivaled any in London for the perfection of its appointments. Lord Errington was thenceforth pronounced a connoisseur in these matters. Mr. Mandeville called there also, but he did so in conformity with permission obtained the preceding evening, from Mrs. Morton,

to hear some of the airs from Verdi's new opera, which he had sent for her daughter to look over. Mandeville was no less an amateur than a connoisseur in music, and Emily Morton's singing combined the wonders of science with the most perfect beauty of expression. The morning was to him one of unmixed enjoyment.

"Will you think me very unreasonable," said he, when Emily for more than an hour had been warbling in her own sweet and unaffected manner—"will you think me very unreasonable, Miss Morton, if I ask once more for this?"

"Oh no—not in the least. I only fear to have wearied you already," said she, as unaffectedly as though her beautiful singing had been a thing of no merit whatever.

"I will endeavour to be *exigeant* in

future, if you will only admit me sometimes," said he, as she began the symphony; "this is really so rare an enjoyment"—and everyone who could have listened to the exquisite pathos with which she went through the required air would have perfectly coincided with him.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" exclaimed he, when it was ended; and the words were uttered in a tone of sincerity not to be mistaken.

That morning was one of unmixed enjoyment to Emily Morton too.

I know not how it happened, but from that time forward Mandeville became a constant and ever-welcome visitor in Portland Place. Lord Errington became a constant visitor there likewise, but it was altogether after a different fashion. Except when

he accepted Mr. Morton's invitations to dinner (which, in compliance with Mrs. Morton's prudent suggestion, were now of very frequent occurrence), Lord Errington had never yet ventured to enter the doors. To maintain an uninterrupted conversation with the ladies of the family, through the prescribed duration of a morning visit, would appear to have been considered by him a task as formidable as to converse with a Cherokee Indian in his own tongue. Mandeville, on the contrary, was never many days without finding an excuse for calling; and yet he contrived that his visits should be always so perfectly *à propos* of something that nobody dreamed of seeing anything extraordinary in their frequent repetition. His manner was equally felicitous

to all, and with all he was an especial favourite, and thus, in a very short space of time, it became as natural for him to call Emily's little brother and sister "Georgy" and "Carry," and for them to call him their "dear Mr. Mandeville," as it would have appeared extraordinary had Lord Errington spoken a single word to them, or had the children themselves dreamed once of approaching the possessor of the beautiful prancing white horse, during the half hour which intervened between the arrival of the guests and the announcement of dinner.

Not that Lord Errington was deficient in various indications of the result towards which his thoughts were tending, but with him, as with most very shy men, it was by silent acts of homage, rather than by any

outward demonstration of feeling, that his intentions could be guessed at. Brought up from earliest childhood in the seclusion of Trentham Abbey, the very few years passed between Eton and the University, together with two devoted to the tour of Europe, which were all that the bereaved earl could be persuaded to spare from his own gratification for the advantage of his son, had not sufficed to blot out the impressions which, at every fresh visit to his paternal halls, were revived.

Thus, unaccustomed to female society, a novice in the ways of that world into which he had lately been for the first time launched, it is not surprising that Lady Wrexham, accustomed as she was to the polished ease and graceful flattery of continental manners, should have pronounced Lord



Errington “awkward and unmannered.” Nor was the reception he met with in the great world at all calculated to render him other than she had described. Nothing could have been more irksome or revolting to one of his temperament than the ceaseless pursuit to which Lord Errington’s position and prospects subjected him. He became more silent, more reserved, more awkward than ever. Yet the same pile of invitations lay each day upon his table—the same smiles were lavished—the same fascinations exercised, as before. It is probable that Lord Errington would at last have been driven to seek safety from his persecutors in flight, had not a closer scrutiny revealed to him that, amid all the sirens by whom he was surrounded, there was one, the fairest, the most fascinating, the most admired of them all, who

was either too high-minded or too modest, or perhaps both, to exercise her manifold attractions in plotting against his peace. Who could have dreamed that the “apathetic—the awkward”—the apparently unobservant Lord Errington could have made such a comparison? Not certainly any one of those who beheld in his reappearance on the world’s stage (for he had lately declined all invitations) only a fresh opportunity for recommencing those machinations which (how little did they think so) had in fact driven him from it.

Still, however, Lord Errington was nearly as silent and undemonstrative as before. He had not yet succeeded in conquering the reserve which had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength. Nevertheless, he did all that was possible, in the

way of cards duly transmitted, and in the acceptance of Mr. Morton's invitations whenever that gentleman chose to send them. Moreover, he consented to part with the most beautiful horse in his stable, because Charles Morton, who had just been gazetted to the Life Guards, could find no other that pleased him so well. And further, at the numerous balls where Emily Morton had now become the cynosure of every eye, Lord Errington invariably went through one quadrille for her, or rather for his own, especial gratification. Lady Wrexham declared that he once went so far as to hand her down stairs, and to put on her shawl, but that, after various unsuccessful efforts, he turned it upside down, and the attempt was never repeated. In this manner Lord Errington came at last to be considered by

Charles Morton as a very good kind of fellow; by Mr. Morton as a quiet, gentlemanlike young man; by Emily as a harmless nonentity, and by Mrs. Morton (to whom the single quadrille was a subject of silent but very satisfactory observation) as heir to the earldom of Trentham.

Between Lord Errington and his cousin there was now as much friendly intercourse as could be possible between two persons so perfectly unsuited to each other; for Mandeville had at once gone through the forms of relationship with his uncle, and been received in a manner as gracious as he had any reason either to care for or to expect. The young men met almost daily, and on one occasion had dined together at Mrs. Morton's, where, fortunately for Emily's peace of mind, Lord Errington's

superior rank compelled him to accept his proper station at the head of the table, beside the hostess.

“The best place for him, *carina*,” whispered Lady Wrexham, laughing, as they ascended the stairs after dinner, for she had not yet quite got over the misadventure at the breakfast.

“What with carving and eating”—(things were carved at table in those days, and Lord Allington, who was seated on the other side, hated carving)—“what with carving and eating, there was as little leisure left for conversation as any one could possibly desire.”

“You are very unforgiving, *Caroline*,” said Emily, laughing in her turn.

“By no means, *carina*; I forgive, but I cannot forget, you know. However, I must

acknowledge that, though certainly silent enough for one of the seven sleepers, his lordship is, after all, extremely gentleman-like in his own way."

The whole party were to meet at a ball in the evening.

"Your lordship is not fond of dancing, I believe," ventured Emily, by way of saying something while the single quadrille was in progress.

"Not generally."

"Do you never valse?" inquired she, perfectly secure in the absence of all danger from the question.

"Never."

And then the attempt at conversation ended.

"Thank Heaven it is over," thought Emily, as the last *chassez croisé* was com-

pleted; and she crossed the room to a seat near her mother.

“Do you know Lord Errington,” said Charles Morton, as his lordship resigned his post by Emily’s side. “I am afraid there is something the matter with the black horse. I have not been down to see him myself, but my man tells me he went lame this morning, and—”

“There was nothing the matter with him that I know of when he left my stable; but if you have the least wish to return him, pray do so. I shall be very glad to have him back again.”

“Take him at his word,” whispered Sir Geoffrey Charlton, as he passed on.

The black horse was returned the following day. To Charles Morton’s no small mortification, Lord Errington was seen every



day in the park till the end of the season, on the splendid animal which he had good-naturedly consented to part with for little more than half its value, while its place was supplied by one of Sir Geoffry Charlton's, which did really turn out lame, and was not, in like manner, taken back.

"I believe our *vis-à-vis* has deserted us," said Mandeville, as he stood up with Emily to take his place in a quadrille.

"Shall I look for another? Or," continued he, with a look which sufficiently implied what were his own wishes, "would you prefer sitting down this dance?"

"I should prefer it very much, for I am really tired."

"We must not remain in this crowd then," said he; and leading her into an ad-



joining apartment, now partially deserted, for the music had attracted almost everyone to the dancing rooms, they took possession of one of its luxurious resting-places, and there, for the next half-hour, the gay scene around them, and all that it contained, was, by one at least, forgotten.

“Is there, then, any chance of Lady Emmeline visiting England?” inquired Emily, in continuation of a previous conversation.

“I believe, and, indeed, I hope not,” said Mandeville. “My mother’s return to this country could only serve to awaken many painful remembrances, which are far better forgotten.”

It was the first time that Mandeville had ever alluded to the circumstances of his family; and as Emily could not, of course,

be supposed to be acquainted with them, she was silent.

“And, besides,” added he, “she has been so long accustomed to the mode of living on the continent, and to the ties she has formed there, that she would scarcely feel herself at home in England. I doubt whether she would find a friend still living to welcome her.”

“Among the friends of former days, perhaps not; but Lady Emmeline would not find herself without a welcome either,” said Emily, smiling; “should she ever come to England, we shall claim your promise, Mr. Mandeville.”

“I am not likely to forget it.”

“Though I fear, after all,” pursued she, “you are right. Nothing can ever compensate for the loss of those we have loved in childhood.”

“Oh, I was far from meaning to say that. The affections of childhood are not *always* those that make the deepest impression.”

And Mandeville at that moment really felt what he said.

“Do you think not? Surely they are the deepest, the most lasting of any,” said Emily.

“In many cases, perhaps so, because the years of childhood are generally the happiest of our existence, and we therefore cling with peculiar fondness to every association connected with them, without pausing to reflect on why we do so; but the affections of later years, to be enduring, require to be based on something better than mere association. They may change, it is true, when the object is found to be unworthy; but when they are inspired by

all that is most excellent, or all that is most beautiful, they are quite as lasting as those of childhood, and of a thousand thousand-fold greater intensity."

"Then how is it," said Emily, in a tone of slight embarrassment, for Mandeville's manner had involuntarily brought the colour to her cheek, "that we so frequently see the most enduring friendships fixed on an object the most unworthy; while another, apparently possessed of every earthly perfection, is neglected and forgotten?"

"We can only suppose," said Mandeville, "that in the one case there must have been some link wanting in the chain of sympathy, while in the other it must imperceptibly have remained unbroken. For," continued he, "to use the words of a writer, who, for beauty of language and

purity of sentiment has never been surpassed, 'sympathy is love; examine love under any other influence, and you will find it an imperfect feeling. The passion of love, the love of nature, of the arts, of all that is good, great, or beautiful, is sympathy, and cannot be heartfelt unless it be so,'\* and," he added, "if not heartfelt, it necessarily ceases to be enduring."

"True; but in what are we to suppose that sympathy consists, when we see friendships the most deep and enduring between persons whose tastes and habits are diametrically opposed to each other?"

"I think that such friendships never do exist, unless where they have grown up with us from childhood; they are then cemented by association."

\* Sketches in the Pyrenees.

“Which brings us to my conclusion at last,” said Emily, smiling, “that the affections of childhood are more enduring than any others in the world.”

“As enduring, I admit — but not more so. It is true that what we have loved in childhood we shall love through life ; and if to the charm of association be superadded that of excellence, we shall do so with increased fervour ; but it will be equally the same with the attachments of our later years, provided the object be found worthy of them. Who is there, for instance, that does not delight, even from earliest youth, in forming for himself a *beau idéal* of perfection, and in worshipping the idol that his fancy has set up ? And if, in after years, he have the rare fortune to meet a being in whom is combined the realisation of all

his brightest dreams, surely no feeling can equal in intensity and in endurance the attachment that is thus inspired?"

Emily made no reply. She felt that his eyes were fixed upon her. She felt, too, that the rose was deepening on her cheek, at last almost painfully. There was a minute's silence, and then she rose and proposed returning to the dancing-room.

## CHAPTER X.

“SYMPATHY is love”—and the most perfect sympathy would appear to have existed between Mandeville and Emily Morton. It was a sympathy of intellect, of taste, of love for the beautiful; and by each the charm derived from its influence on their now daily intercourse was felt and appreciated in its fullest extent. In pouring forth the intellectual treasures wherewith



his mind was so richly stored, Mandeville knew that he did so to one who could comprehend their full value. In listening to the rich flow of language which lent a peculiar charm to every subject on which he spoke, Emily felt that her superiority of intellect was estimated as it deserved. It was not so much the similarity of tastes, as the consciousness of mutual appreciation, that constituted the link between them. Emily's acquirements, it is true, though she had read more than most girls of her age, were immeasurably inferior to those of Mandeville ; but where the capability existed of estimating his attainments, though she might never hope to equal them, was not this very inequality one of the strongest bonds of union that could possibly have existed ? There was in her a looking

up to his opinion—a deference to his judgment—a desire for his approval; while to him the study and the culture of a mind so young, so fair, and yet withal so full of intellect and feeling, was a source of interest such as till now he never had experienced. Perhaps there could scarcely have been a position better calculated than was theirs for awakening an attachment such as that of whose endurance and intensity Mandeville had spoken. And there was yet another spring by which the preference even of the best and wisest are not uninfluenced.

Emily Morton was now the cynosure of every eye. Mandeville was (with the fair sex at least) the most admired and popular man in London; and it is amazing how our admiration (more especially when it is based on something better than mere personal

beauty) will increase in proportion with that of others. It is grateful to our vanity to perceive that the fiat of public opinion coincides with our own; still more grateful to our self-love, to find ourselves the chosen object of attraction to one for whose smiles all are contending. Such was precisely the relative position of Edward Mandeville and Emily Morton. There was the pride of acknowledged superiority in their mutual preference, that rendered it doubly attractive; and of all the avenues through which the dominion of love is established in the human heart, there is not one more seductive, or perhaps more treacherous, than this.

And yet in Mandeville's manner when they met, there was nothing that could have called forth general remark. His mode of address was at all times, and to all

persons, peculiarly felicitous; and no one but a very keen observer could have detected any extraordinary expression of interest towards any one in particular. His assiduities towards Emily Morton were apparently far less than those of half-a-dozen others; and although it was pretty generally known that Lord Thomas Grantham and Captain Seymour had both vanished, nobody knew where, all for the love of her *beaux yeux*, and that the little French *attaché* had not yet recovered his amazement at Mademoiselle Emilie's bad taste in refusing to marry him, *nom, titre, amour propre*, and all, yet, among the number of Miss Morton's suitors, no one ever seemed to dream of Mr. Mandeville. Public opinion, indeed, at that moment, pointed towards Lord Errington; for the frequent visits and the single

quadrille were both, in a person of his notoriety, too remarkable in their way to escape observation; and this it was, probably, that blinded even Emily's own family to the state of affairs, and that induced Mrs. Morton so immediately to acquiesce in her daughter's rejection of Lord Thomas Grantham, with his younger son's portion of two thousand a year. With respect to Lord Errington, his attentions were so unobtrusive, that Emily endured them with the utmost equanimity, and this very probably led to a conclusion, both in his mind and that of others, very different from anything she had intended. It was, in fact, generally rumoured that the close of the season would find Miss Morton converted into the future Countess of Trentham.

“ And a handsome couple they'll make,

too—won't they, Sir John?" said Lady Courtney, as they drove to the theatre, where a box had been secured by the good-natured aunt, for Miss Polly's especial amusement. "What a nice young nobleman he is!"

"La! aunt, is that the lord with the pretty white horse?" exclaimed Polly. "Why, I'm sure he's as dull as an owl."

"Hush, my dear—don't speak so; recollect who you're talking about," said Lady Courtney, shocked at her niece's indiscretion.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed the incorrigible Polly, with something between a sigh and a groan, "if all lords are like him, what a precious set of dummies they must be."

Sir John tried to look angry, but the coming reproof was checked by the opening

of the carriage door, and in two minutes Polly had forgotten the "dummy" lord in the delights of the play enacting before her.

"How lovely Emily Morton looked last night," observed Lady Caroline Douglas to Sir Charles, as they sat at breakfast the morning after Lady Brenton's ball.

"She *is* very lovely. I never saw symmetry of feature and beauty of expression so combined. Do you think Errington will marry her, after all? I sometimes fancy that he will never be able to get through his apology for courtship."

"Do you think Miss Morton will marry *him*?"

"If he asks her, to be sure she will. There are not three girls in London who would refuse him. Three! no, nor one,



probably. Why, do you know what Lord Trentham's rent-roll is ? ”

“ Why, really no,” said Lady Caroline, laughing; “ but it must be very long indeed to make amends for the penalty attached to it.”

“ Lord Trentham has a clear forty thousand a-year.”

“ And how much of it has been expended on the civilization of his son ? ”

“ I assure you that Errington was both at Eton and Oxford.”

“ Oh, no, Charles—impossible. Eton and Oxford never sent forth anything so *gauche* as that.”

“ You have no daughters old enough to marry, Lady Caroline,” said Sir Charles, laughing.

“ Thank heaven—no.”



“Or you would have found out before this what it is that renders Lord Errington so shy and intractable. If these lady mammas, who are hunting him from morning till night, do not take care what they are about, they will fairly drive him out of the field at last, and then farewell to Trent-ham Abbey.”

In the dining-room in Bruton Street, at the same moment, Sir William and Lady Wrexham were seated at breakfast; the former discussing his morning's meal, with the last number of the *United Service Journal* lying on the table beside him, its envelope still unbroken, while his pretty little wife went on prattling in her own light and cheerful strain.

“Caro,” said she, “you have not relieved me once since we sat down to breakfast; and

even the dear Journal there has been forgotten. What can you be thinking of? I do believe you have been dreaming all this time of Emily Morton's bright eyes."

"Perhaps you were not very far wrong," said Sir William. "I was thinking of making you a request, Caroline."

"I would say—granted; but you really look so grave, I am afraid it must be something very terrible."

"Not *very* terrible," answered Sir William, smiling. "I was only going to ask you to give up some of those numerous pic-nics and parties you have in contemplation."

"E perchè, caro?"

"I will tell you why; and I think you will say my reason is sufficient. That sweet girl, Emily Morton, is on the high road to

much unhappiness, and I would not willingly have you instrumental in hastening it. Have you observed no symptoms of an attachment between her and Mandeville?"

"Oh, you are quite wrong there," said Lady Wrexham, with a reassured look. "In the first place, Emily knows perfectly well from me the history of all his flirtations, and more particularly of that with Blanche Thornham, to whom most people think he is engaged—and I am not quite sure about it myself; and, in the second, Mr. Mandeville has never paid *her* any particular attention."

"I have more leisure for observation than you have, Caroline, and, believe me, it is *you* who are wrong, and not I. I do not mean to say that there is any very serious mischief done yet; but I should be very

sorry to see them thrown much together, for Mandeville is not a man to whom any woman would attach herself by halves, and particularly such a woman as Emily Morton. The idea of his marrying her, would, you know, be perfectly preposterous. I do not suppose he has three hundred a-year in the world."

"I do not suppose that he has ; but I am convinced that neither of them has the least thought of anything of the kind."

"So much the worse. If neither of them *had* thought of it, they might have been reminded of the impossibility of the thing, and have avoided the danger of a hopeless attachment."

"But indeed, caro, I do not think there is any attachment in the case. You know *his* manner to everyone, and as for Emily,

I really believe she means to marry Lord Errington — she endures his proceedings with such heroic fortitude.”

“And why, if her affections were disengaged, should she *not* marry Lord Errington?” returned Sir William. “I know it is the fashion amongst you ladies to abuse him, but really I never heard anything but good of the young man.”

“Why, really,” said Lady Wrexham, “we hear so little about him in any way, that it is very difficult to tell what he may be. We only know that as the companion of one hour, he would be perfectly unendurable. What then would he be as a companion for life?”

“My own dear little wife,” said Sir William, “many a woman destroys her own happiness by arguing as you do. No wo-

man can expect to meet with a combination of every earthly good; and if, combined with such advantages of position and fortune, she can find an amiable, high principled man, even though he be possessed of no external accomplishment, it is quite as much as she has a right to expect. She will have a far better chance of happiness in marrying a man of sterling worth, than had she chosen one possessed of the most brilliant acquirements without it. Remember, I am not arguing Lord Errington's case individually, for I know him too little to form an opinion; but I think it a pity that the chances of what is certainly a very brilliant, and might be a very happy, marriage should be cast away only for that which *must* end in disappointment."

"But do you think that Emily could ever

be happy with Lord Errington? He is so *gauche*, so silent. Do you think, in fact, that a woman could ever be happy with a man whom she felt ashamed of presenting to the world as her choice?"

"Ashamed, Caroline—ashamed of Lord Errington!"

"Well, he is gentlemanlike, I acknowledge, but then—"

"But you are accustomed to continental manners, and therefore cannot tolerate his," interposed Sir William. "What woman, my dear little wife, need ever be ashamed of presenting to the world, as her husband, any man whose principles and actions are such as to command *their* respect and *her* esteem. Where the brilliant acquirements which adorn society can be combined with those domestic virtues which alone will



ensure happiness to our own firesides, the union is beautiful indeed; but it is very rare, because people who are accustomed to be worshipped as stars by the world very often do not find it worth their while to be agreeable at home."

Lady Wrexham was silent for a moment.

"Well, you will at least allow," said she, "that to be proud of those we love—even of their acquirements, I mean—of the admiration they excite—is a very delightful feeling."

"If combined with pride in their amiable qualities, no doubt it is, and it becomes then a very happy feeling too; otherwise, I think it is too deeply mingled with regret to be so. Believe me, Caroline, no woman who values her own happiness should ever choose her husband merely for his brilliant



acquirements. For the world, it is all well enough ; but she may return from the scene of his triumph, and of her own pride, to a neglected home, and with an aching heart, for all that."

"I daresay you are quite right, caro ; but *I* know so little about either, that perhaps I am an indifferent judge," said Lady Wrexham, with an affectionate smile ; "I think, however, you are mistaken concerning this attachment between Emily and Mr. Mandeville, but I will give up the picnics if you think it better."

"I do think it better for Emily's sake ; and you will not, I know, begrudge her the sacrifice of a few hours' amusement."

"That, indeed, I shall not," replied Lady Wrexham, with warmth ; "though I suspect, caro," added she, after a moment's

thought, "that in so doing we shall but make matters worse. Mr. Mandeville will inevitably pass the hours thus unemployed in Portland Place."

"Why should you suppose so?"

"He is there almost every day, and remains half the day," replied Lady Wrexham.

Sir William paused.

"Is Mrs. Morton aware of Mandeville's prospects?" inquired he, after a few moments' thought.

"Perfectly; she knows his whole history from myself."

"What are mothers dreaming of?—what are mothers for?" exclaimed Sir William.

"Let the pic-nics go on, Caroline. You are right. The one danger is at least less than the other. We will do what we can, but that, I fear, is little."

And as Lady Wrexham left the room, Sir William, with a sigh, broke the envelope of the Journal, though, for full five minutes afterwards, he sat with his eyes fixed on the carpet, and his hand resting on its unopened pages.

## CHAPTER XI.

AND where was Mandeville, and what were his thoughts, while opinions were so rife and so varied on the little drama that was enacting? On the very day preceding that on which the conversation we have just recorded took place, his progress along Albemarle Street (when on his way to the accustomed daily visit) had been arrested by a travelling carriage which drew

up at Crawley's Hotel exactly at the moment he was passing. Mandeville instinctively turned his head to reconnoitre, and the next moment he was at the carriage door, assisting the two ladies that were within to alight. Bright was the blush, and sparkling the glance of recognition that had arrested his attention. Warm were the greetings, and eager the expressions of delight at meeting that were now mutually exchanged.

Mandeville accompanied the two ladies upstairs; and, with great appearance of good will, yielded to their expressed wish that he would sit down, "if only for a minute," which minute might have proved of very indefinite duration, but that the opening and shutting of doors, the depositing of travelling cases, and the inquiries for fur-

ther orders entirely precluded the possibility of anything like uninterrupted conversation. After the lapse of a few minutes, the younger lady took her station at the middle window, with the ostensible purpose of watching the safe transit of those valuables still to be removed from the carriage, though apparently she was far more intent on carrying on a very animated course of question and answer with Mandeville, who stood beside her ; while her mother was too busily occupied, ordering this box here, and that box there, in speaking to the courier, and in giving orders to the waiter, to offer any interruption to their conversation.

“I had no idea you were in England, Mr. Mandeville,” said the young lady, her brilliant black eyes sparkling with delight. “I did all I could to keep mamma abroad ;

but she insisted on coming to London to have me presented at Court."

"I think she did quite right, for every reason; but as you disliked coming so very much, it is selfish in me to say so."

"Oh, as for that, it was not that I so very particularly disliked coming to England, as that I wished to stay abroad."

"Pour l'amour de qui?"—and Mandeville fixed his eyes on hers with a sportive expression of inquiry.

"*L'amour* had nothing to say to it in any way, I can assure you," replied the young lady, laughing, as, with a rather heightened colour, she shook back the jetty ringlets that clustered round her face. "Or, if it had, it was purely and entirely the love of my own dear self."

"Blanche, my love, where shall they put

your cap-case?" inquired her mother, breaking cruelly into the dialogue.

"Anywhere you like, mamma. In my room, I suppose."

"But which room will you have, my love." And in spite of the "I do not care, mamma," while the young lady retained her position immovably in the window, in exemplification of her indifference on the matter, and her desire not to be disturbed, Mandeville perceived he was in the way, and took up his hat.

"We shall be better able to talk over old times the next time we meet, Mr. Mandeville," said the mamma. "We shall be quite settled to-morrow, and delighted to receive you."

Mandeville promised to call on the morrow, shook hands very cordially with both,



and, taking his leave, went on his way to Portland Place.

Mrs. Thornham had done right in insisting on her daughter's return to England—right for her daughter's sake, no less than for that of her own projects regarding her. The continent was a dangerous place for a very pretty girl, as wild and thoughtless as the winds of heaven, and with fifty thousand pounds in her pocket; and though Blanche Thornham had escaped from beneath the shower of penniless princes, counts, and barons, who had flung themselves for acceptance at her feet, with only a few slight wounds, healed almost as soon as inflicted, yet still the deliverance had not been effected without more heartburnings and difficulties of all kinds than Mrs. Thornham was at all willing to encounter a second time.

The wish of her heart was to see her daughter united to a man of worth, and (if truth must be spoken) of rank too, could the two be united; and the title of Princessa, or Contessa, or anything else equally euphonious, was no doubt very attractive; but she had too much plain good sense and true maternal solicitude not to feel that the bauble was as nothing when weighed against the small chances of happiness such marriages ordinarily hold forth, and she was not at all sorry to perceive that Mr. Mandeville's flirtation, throughout the winter they passed together at Naples, acted as a very salutary counterpoise in the scale of her daughter's preferences. Whether Blanche herself had any very particular predisposition in that gentleman's favour, or whether he felt disposed to take advantage

of it, was an enigma which the young lady's habitually light-hearted manner, and her general system of indiscriminate flirtation, rendered very difficult of solution. There was quite enough to serve as something for idle people to talk about, though by no means sufficient to nip the hopes of other candidates for the smiles of the heiress, whose fortune was, of course, magnified to exactly double its real value. Thus, while some thought Mandeville a "devilish lucky fellow," others protested that Miss Thornham cared not a rush more for him than for a half a dozen others besides. While Lady Emmeline, whom the report had reached, was silently pondering on the possibility of *her* son attaching himself to an Irish heiress of low degree, however rich, or however pretty, and on the expediency

of questioning him on the subject, Mrs. Thornham was secretly weighing the manifold attractions of Mr. Mandeville, together with the remote chance of his succeeding to the estates and earldom of Trentham, against the probability of meeting with any more eligible marriage for her daughter. In the midst of these contending feelings and opinions, the whole of the Wrexham party suddenly took their departure from Naples ; and very soon afterwards Mrs. Thornham followed up her resolution of proceeding to England, not, however, in pursuit of Mandeville, but to seek any still better fortune that Fate might send her.

Mandeville was true to his engagement on the following day. He found Miss Thornham again standing by the middle window

of their drawing-room, on the first floor, from whence she was watching the passengers below. Her travelling dress had now been exchanged for a *chef d'œuvre* fresh from Paris ; and if she had (as Mandeville had assured her) looked remarkably well the day before, Blanche undeniably looked exceedingly beautiful now. She was of the middle size, and beautifully formed, with a profusion of glossy black hair, eyes of the most sparkling brilliancy, and lips that would have shamed the ruby. There was no attempt at concealment, either in Mandeville's manner, or in the sparkling look of pleasure of Miss Thornham, as they advanced to meet each other. As for Blanche, she had never disguised any feeling in her life, and she would quite as soon have dreamed of concealing her

luxuriant tresses beneath a nun's cap, as of doing so.

"I hope I find you better reconciled to-day than you were yesterday, to the prospect of a season in London," said Mandeville, after their first greeting was over.

"Oh, I am quite reconciled already. I am certain it will all be extremely delightful; though I sometimes can scarcely believe that I am really in London, it looks so like old times to find you here."

"I had almost feared that, before this, those pleasant old times would have been forgotten."

"Forgotten!—you can hardly imagine how delightful it was to see a face that I knew, after passing through so many long, straight, dismal-looking streets without

encountering a single creature that either knew or cared a rush about me."

"My face is infinitely obliged to you," said Mandeville, laughing; "but I suppose that anyone else's would have done equally well. What say you, for instance, to that of the little comte? Do you not think that its effect would have been far more striking?"

"In mercy spare me the recollection of such horrors," exclaimed Blanche, while the exuberance of her spirits lent additional animation to her manner.

"You are really very unreasonable, Miss Thornham. The unfortunate little comte at least did what he could to win your favour, like a true and loyal knight; and if he did not succeed, it was certainly not *his* fault."



“*You* are very provoking to remind me of anything at all about him, Mr. Mandeville. I could almost wish that he were seated here opposite to you, just to prove what a horrible reminiscence you have conjured up.”

“May the Fates protect me from so dreadful an exchange,” exclaimed Mandeville, as he rose to pick up the embroidered handkerchief which Miss Thornham, after having showered it with Eau de Cologne, from a bottle on the table beside her, had let fall at her feet.

“And now place yourself comfortably in that *bergère* there, Mr. Mandeville,” continued Blanche, pointing to an arm-chair opposite to her, “for you have an enormously long history to tell me of all you have been doing since you left Naples.”



“ In other words, I am to constitute you my confessor. Will you promise to do the same by me in return ? ”

“ Good gracious, no ; I will have no conditions, so pray go on—for you know of old that my stock of patience is not a very large one.”

“ Only one condition, and I am content,” said Mandeville, in a beseeching tone.

Blanche raised her sparkling black eyes to his, with an expression at once mirthful and inquiring.

“ Only that you will not look at me too often, or I shall inevitably forget what I was saying.”

“ Nonsense ! ” said Blanche, dropping her bright orbs upon the carpet, while the colour rose in her cheek, and a beautiful smile played round her mouth. “ Pray go

on—I am all attention. In the first place, what has become of Lady Wrexham?”

“She has been in London for the last two months, and will remain till the end of the season.”

“Oh, how delighted I am! How rejoiced I shall be to see her; and dear kind Sir William, too,” and Blanche looked up, utterly forgetful of Mandeville’s prohibition, and with an unfeigned expression of joy, from whence every trace of coquetry was banished.

“And she will be delighted to see you, too, I make no doubt. Shall I tell her where you are?”

“Oh, by all means. Mamma, you will be so glad to hear that Lady Wrexham is in London,” said Blanche to her mother, whose toilet had been less expeditiously

completed than that of her daughter, for the packing-cases had not been disburdened of their contents till the morning.

This was a fortunate occurrence indeed. Lady Wrexham would present them at Court. Lady Wrexham would assist them in everything. Lady Wrexham was the most good-natured person in the world. In discussing the history which Blanche had required of the past, and in planning agreeable things for the future, Mandeville's visit insensibly spun itself out into within three minutes of an hour. He had risen, hat in hand, when Mrs. Thornham's Italian servant brought in a large bouquet of moss roses, in search of which the unfortunate creature had been for two hours toiling half over the town; for Blanche, in her love for flowers, had totally forgotten that poor

Carlo would find it no such easy task here to obey her commands as in his own native Naples, where they bloomed at every turn.

“I tink I valk tree league to find ’em, Signorina,” said he, looking very hot and very much disconcerted. “Dere be no flower here plenty like as in Napoli; and dey cost very dear too. I give five shillin for *dem*, vat I get in Napoli for few carlini.”

“I think I can tell you where to get them more readily in future, Carlo,” said Mandeville, for they were old acquaintances.

“Tank ye, sir; I be very glad. To-day I lose my vay. De street be all so long and so straight, I not know von from de oder.”

“I cannot live without flowers,” said Blanche, as Carlo closed the door; I must

have my bouquet here, as usual, every morning. Pray, do find out where we can get them; and let us know when you come to-morrow."

Mandeville smiled inwardly at the certainty of his "coming to-morrow" implied in the request, but he promised compliance.

"I can scarcely promise you more beautiful roses than these, however," said he, taking up the bouquet. "Carlo is certainly a judge of flowers."

"Will you have one?" said Blanche, selecting a beautiful moss-rose, and holding it towards him. "You need not be surprised at my generosity, for you see I have kept plenty here to last me till to-morrow."

"Bella quanto la rosa," said Mandeville, looking up at her with one of his own

graceful bows, as he placed the rose in his button-hole. "What will Carlo say, after all his toil, at my carrying off the pride of his bouquet? We shall have the wars of the roses over again, Miss Thornham."

The rose was by this time adjusted, and Mrs. Thornham's arrangement of the bouquet in the flower-glass complete.

"I will see lady Wrexham to-day, then, and tell her that you are here," said Mandeville. "Till to-morrow, *a rivederle*;" and holding out his hand to each, he vanished, and passed on his way to Portland Place.

"Ah, ha! who you tink up stair wid meessis, Meessis Smit?" said Carlo, as he hurried down from the drawing-room to the dinner which had been waiting for him a full half-hour.

“La! Carlo, how should I know? I’m too hungry to care about missis’s visitors.”

“Ah, ha, who you tink do?”

“Why, who? Can’t you speak out, Carlo, with your ‘ah, ha’s?’” snapped Mrs. Smith, who was by this time very cross and very hungry.

“Vat you give to know?” responded Carlo, placing his finger knowingly on the side of his nose, and bringing his cheek into rather close quarters with that of the lady, as he strove to look into her averted eyes.

“I wouldn’t give a fig to know,” exclaimed Mrs. Smith, as, with a toss of the head, she bridled herself away from Carlo’s approximation, and plumped herself down at the dinner-table, as the

best mode of concealing her bursting curiosity.

“Oh, you leetle conning ting!” said Carlo, once more approaching his head close to hers. “What you tink for—Monsieur—Mandeville?”

“Mr. Mandeville!” echoed Mrs. Smith, turning herself quite round in her chair, and looking him directly in the face. “My stars, how glad I am! We shall have a wedding as sure as fate.”

“Ah, ha, yes, quite sure, von wedding vera good ting. Let us have two, Meessis Smit,” whispered Carlo, in his most winning tones, and bending his head down rather closer than the lady liked, to receive her answer.

“Nonsense, Carlo—eat your dinner. I can’t think of two things at a time,” was



the ungracious reply, as the lady jerked her head suddenly away, without vouchsafing to look at him.

And Carlo, being a very submissive lover, did as he was bid.

## CHAPTER XII.

EVERYTHING occurred as Mrs. Thornham had prognosticated.

Lady Wrexham did present them at Court. Lady Wrexham did assist them in everything. Lady Wrexham was the most good-natured person in the world. Not that it would have required any very great exercise of self-denial, even had Lady Wrexham been less good-natured than she really was,

for the case here was widely different from that of poor Lady Courtney and her *déjeûné*. Had the “to be, or not to be,” as regarded Mrs. and Miss Thornham, been debated in a conclave of Lady Patronesses, the Ayes would unhesitatingly have had it; for Blanche was not only eminently pretty and ornamental, but she was besides an heiress; while in her mother’s appearance and manners there was nothing in the least objectionable, even to the most fastidious, though her youth had been passed exclusively in a small country town in Ireland, where Mr. Thornham, in the double capacity of steward to Sir William Wrexham, and lawyer to half the country round, had contrived, in the space of a few years, to increase his fortune sufficiently to leave his widow independent, and his

daughter an heiress. But Mrs. Thornham possessed a vast amount of natural strong sense, joined to a vast deal of the ready tact and talent peculiar to her country, so that by the time she had passed a few years at Bath, during Blanche's childhood, and a few more on the continent for the completion of her daughter's education, her husband himself, poor man, could he have risen from the dead, would scarcely have recognised his own wife in the handsome, well-dressed, and well-bred woman before him.

How great soever might have been Blanche's delight at the prospect of meeting Lady Wrexham, it certainly was, to a certain extent, shared by Lady Wrexham herself. She was very fond of Blanche Thornham, and none the less because Sir William took a very kindly interest in her welfare.

During a visit of some weeks at Rock Castle, shortly after their marriage, Blanche's inexhaustible spirits had been perfectly invaluable. Lady Wrexham was accustomed to declare that she should have died of *ennui* without her; and though, when they met afterwards, amid the multiplied attractions of Naples, all danger of a similar catastrophe was dispelled, yet still the "wild Irish girl," as she was currently called, with her sparkling black eyes, and her lively manner, that operated like a sunbeam on all with whom she came in contact, continued as great a favourite as ever.

But in the present case there was still another source of satisfaction to be derived from Mrs. Thornham's arrival in London, and Lady Wrexham determined to turn it to the best account. She had no doubt

that Blanche's flirtation with Mr. Mandeville would be renewed, though without any danger to her own giddy little heart, which, like the butterfly, could flit from object to object without brushing one hue of brightness from its wing; while, at the same time, it might be converted into a very effectual shield for the preservation of her Cousin Emily. On these thoughts intent, Lady Wrexham flew to communicate the intelligence she had received to Sir William.

"Beware what you are about, Caroline," said he. "You are playing with edged tools, and may do mischief before you are aware of it. The game of hearts," continued he, smiling, "requires a vast deal of diplomacy, to play it with safety; and I am afraid, my dear little wife, with all her

perfections, would make but a sorry stateswoman."

"I am resolved to prove to the contrary, in pure spite for your bad opinion of me," said Lady Wrexham, laughing. "May I ask the Thornhams to dine here next week, to begin operations?"

"Yes—and with all my heart. I shall rejoice to see my little Blanche after her escape from all the perils and dangers which beset her at Naples; and doubly so, if we can find for her some good English husband, who will know how to value her as she deserves."

"Mr. Mandeville would do exactly for Blanche," observed Lady Wrexham, who, like most of her sex, loved a little bit of diplomacy in her own way. "He wants nothing but fortune, which she could

give him. Shall I ask him to meet them ? ”

“ Do, if you like.”

“ And I must think of some others to whom I can introduce them. I do not suppose that Mrs. Thornham knows any one in London, unless it may be a few stray foreign acquaintances. The Mortons will not be in town again till the beginning of the week after—till Monday, I think Emily told me ; so I must put them off till another time. However, there will be no great difficulty, for Blanche is really so pretty and elegant, every one will be glad to know her. There is the carriage,” continued she, stepping to the window ; “ I am going to Albemarle Street now—shall I take you so far on your way to the club, caro ? ”

Sir William had not finished his paper,



and Lady Wrexham drove off without him.

During the whole of the following week, the Mortons were absent at the Grange, and Mandeville's mornings would have been a good deal unoccupied (for the greater part of them were now habitually passed in Portland Place), had it not been for the seasonable arrival of Mrs. Thornham and Blanche. I do not mean to say that Mandeville was without those resources which might, with equal pleasure and profit, have whiled away many more solitary hours than he was ever likely to pass. Few men had so many; but we are all, more or less, creatures of habit; and since his arrival in London, or, more properly speaking, since the commencement of his intimacy with the Morton family, the habit of amusement had become

so familiar to him, as to render everything else distasteful. To an idle man, under such circumstances, nothing could be more inviting than Mrs. Thornham's drawing-room. That Mandeville thought it so, might very naturally be inferred from the fact that each morning of the week, during which the house in Portland Place remained untenanted, found him sauntering, as a matter of course, into Crawley's, there to merge his own *ennui* in Blanche's vivacity, and to while away, in her lively sallies, the time till Emily Morton's return.

Lady Wrexham's dinner turned out a very agreeable affair. There were, besides Mrs. Thornham and her daughter, the Douglasses, and the Courtneys, and the Grenvilles, with Lady Brenton (whose second ball was already talked of) and her

daughter; while Mandeville, with two more bachelor dancing-men, filled up the vacant places. Mandeville, of course, took possession of Miss Thornham, and in so doing won for himself the envy of some, and the remarks of all. Nothing could be pleasanter, or more animated, than the conversation between them. There could be little doubt that the report of their engagement would very soon be confirmed, and Mandeville was once more pronounced a "devilish lucky fellow;" while he, on his part, seemed very well disposed to prove the truth of the assertion.

"You like the opera, do you not, Blanche?" inquired Lady Wrexham, as she followed the ladies with Blanche upstairs to the drawing-room, after dinner.

"I am so happy at this moment, dear

Lady Wrexham, that I like everything in the world."

"I am very glad of it, my dear child; but that was not exactly the answer I wanted. You would like to go to the opera, would you not?"

"Better than anything."

"Very well; you shall have my box then on Saturday. I cannot go with you myself, because I am engaged to Lady Langley's concert; but you shall have the box to do what you like with."

"How kind you are," was all Blanche had time to say, and she seized Lady Wrexham's hand, and kissed it *à l'Italienne*, as they reached the drawing-room door.

Mandeville was engaged on the Saturday to Lady Langley's concert, too; but he

could not find time to go to it. Blanche had asked him in the morning, as a thing perfectly natural, to be their escort to the opera. She and Mrs. Thornham had never been at the opera in London before, and they had no *cavalieri serventi* here, as at Naples, to take care of them; and Mandeville had no ready plea for declining the engagement, even had he felt disposed to do so, which he was not. Besides, what did it matter? The Morton's could not be at Lady Langley's, for they were not in town;—he gained a pleasant evening, did an acceptable service, and lost nothing.

And Emily Morton—what had been her occupation—what the occupation of her thoughts during the week of her absence at the Grange? Let the events of the day

preceding her departure (it was that on which Mandeville had paid his first visit to the Thornham's—that also of Lady Brenton's ball) speak for themselves.

## CHAPTER XIII.

ON quitting Crawley's, after paying his first visit to the Thornhams, Mandeville went on his way to Portland Place, with thoughts, it might be, more pre-occupied than usual, but still with the same light step as before. On turning into Hanover Square, he encountered Charles Grenville, and had just shaken hands with him, when Lord Errington drew up beside them.

“How are you, Mandeville? How do you do, Captain Grenville?” said he, as he endeavoured to restrain the impetuosity of his horse. “I was just going to leave a note for you, Mandeville. My father wants you to dine with him before he leaves town. He is off on Thursday. I hope you are disengaged, and can come; though, my father being so unwell, I fear I can promise you only ourselves.”

“Very happy,” interrupted Mandeville, rather stiffly, for the ice had not yet thawed between himself and his cousin.

“Monday—shall it be Monday?”

And as Mandeville assented, Lord Errington rode off.

“It is a wonder that my relation’s head is not turned with all the hearts that are laid for acceptance at his feet,” said Mande-



ville, looking after him with a curl of the lip which was quite irrepressible, for Lord Errington had not improved in his good graces, now that the report had spread far and wide of his matrimonial intentions.

“I daresay, if he would only let us know a little more of him,” said Charles Grenville, who never thought or spoke ill of a human being in his life, “we should find out that he is a very good sort of fellow. When is the coronet to be laid at Emily’s feet—eh?—are you in the secret?”

“Not I,” said Mandeville drily. “I know as little of his intentions as anyone. Never, I should think, if we are to judge from appearances.”

“They are keeping it all very snug,” rattled on Captain Grenville. “I asked

my aunt about it the other day, but she only laughed, and said nothing."

"Do you think there is really anything in it, then?"

"As sure as a gun, as Georgy would say; and though she is my own cousin, I must say that Emmy will grace His Lordship's coronet as much as any one I know. Do you go to Lady Brenton's to-night?"

"Yes"—and each passed on his own way.

Mandeville's glove was quite new, and rather small, so that the impatient twitch with which he attempted to draw it on' caused a lamentable fracture. The rose in his button-hole, too, had very nearly suffered decapitation from the jerk with which he readjusted its position; but a thorn in the stem wounded his finger, and though

calling forth a not very placable ejaculation, saved it from further molestation.

“Nulle rose sans épine,” was Mandeville’s reflection. “What a fool I am,” was his thought a moment after, “not to judge for myself, instead of heeding these idle reports. She will never marry *him*. I know her better,” and in a few moments more, his well-known foot was ascending the stair in Portland Place.

The same glad welcome met him as ever—the same bright smile from Emily—the same joyous greeting from the little ones. Mrs. Morton was out, but Mandeville was never denied admittance; and he sat chatting on, unmindful of the lapse of time, with Carry on one knee, and Georgy on the other, till the stopping of a carriage, and the prancing of a horse at the door,

drew the children from their post to the window, and in a minute both were clambering up on a chair, with the exclamation :—

“Oh, Emma, it is the man with the beautiful prancing horse. Look, look, Mr. Mandeville—do come and look at him !”

“I believe the man with the beautiful prancing horse is very fond of coming here,” said Mandeville, dryly, as he rose to obey the child’s summons, just as Lord Errington’s equipage dashed from the door.

“I’m sure I don’t know what he comes for then,” said Georgy, “for he never speaks a word to anybody.”

“I am afraid the man with the beautiful prancing horse is no great favourite,” said Mandeville, laughing.

“I don’t like him at all,” said Georgy, stoutly.

“I don’t like him much, either,” said Carry; “but,” added she, shaking her little head very knowingly, “I know something about him though.”

“And what do you know?” inquired Mandeville, almost angry with himself for the importance he attached to the child’s answer.

“Hush, Carry,” said Emily, drawing her little sister towards her, for she began to feel very uncomfortable. “You must not talk nonsense, dear.”

“I will tell no one but my own dear Mr. Mandeville,” exclaimed the child, eager to disburden herself of the great secret; and disengaging herself from Emily’s grasp, she sprang towards him, and, putting her little arms round his neck, drew his head down, so that he could hear her whisper:—

“He wants to have Emmy for his wife,” were the words which reached Emily’s ear. “Now don’t tell, for it is a great, great secret,” added the little girl aloud, as she withdrew her arms from about his neck, and, holding up her finger, darted back in great glee to her sister.

“What have you been saying, Carry?” said Emily, bending her head over the silken ringlets of her little sister to conceal the colour which had risen almost painfully into her cheek.

“Oh, I shall not tell *you*.” And the child, in happy unconsciousness of the train of thought which her little prattle had awakened, bounded back to her favourite again, and was reinstated in her former place. “What a pretty, pretty rose,” said she, looking at the flower in Mandeville’s button-hole.

"I believe you have been committing theft, Mr. Mandeville," said Emily, smiling as unconcernedly as she could, and glad of any excuse to change a subject which was too evidently painful.

For a moment Mandeville did not reply. The electric chain had been touched, and now, the various reports that had at different times reached him, the words uttered by Charles Grenville only an hour before, even the artless prattle of little Carry, all were gradually concentrating themselves into the conviction which he had long dreaded.

"If I have," said he at last, in answer to Emily's remark, "it is a very harmless one. There are some thing which, once stolen, can never be restored, and for the loss of which nothing can make amends. How



strange it is," he continued, observing that Emily remained silent, "that people can never learn wisdom from the experience of others. We all go on fixing our affections on the most impossible things, and discover the error only when too late to remedy it; and then we rail at fate, instead of blaming our own blind infatuation. But I must not speak to you, Miss Morton," he pursued, with a bitter smile, and as if suddenly recollecting himself, "of a subject *you* cannot possibly comprehend. Those who have never known disappointment cannot comprehend what it means."

"Indeed, you mistake," said Emily, in some embarrassment. "I can fully comprehend the bitterness of the feeling."

"In its fullest extent?—impossible—though, I doubt not," continued he, look-



ing up for the first time, "that you may do so sufficiently to feel for it in another."

Again the rose deepened in Emily's cheek, and for a moment she was silent.

"But do you not think," said she, evading the previous remark, and endeavouring to generalize the subject, "that disappointment is very often proved to be far less unendurable than people are disposed to allow. I sometimes fancy there can be no such thing in the world, from the many happy faces one sees."

"In other words, *you*, to meet whom 'every face is dressed in smiles,' cannot conceive that those outward tokens of a happy heart should not be genuine."

"Indeed, I cannot—I cannot conceive that any one could assume successfully

a feeling of any kind that was not real; neither," she added, after a moment's hesitation, "can I imagine why they should do so."

"Can you, then, conceive no circumstance wherein the assumption of indifference becomes a duty no less than a task?"

"Indeed I cannot," replied Emily, quickly. "To assume any unreal feeling, for the mere purpose of deception, might be a task, but could surely never be a duty."

Mandeville gazed at her a moment in silence.

"Shall I prove that it is otherwise?" said he.

She made no reply; and Mandeville's eyes rested for a moment on the two children who lingered near him.

“You love the language of Persian allegory,” said he; “let me endeavour, then, to borrow from it. Suppose that, in a thoughtful hour, we had wandered into the garden of hope, and, selecting the fairest of its flowers, had watched over our treasure from day to day till all its beauty had expanded, and all its fragrance had exhaled before us, and that we had learned to appreciate its surpassing excellencies over every other only at the very moment when a stronger hand than ours came and plucked the treasure from us. Or, to use the simpler language of our own land,” continued he, in a lower tone, “suppose that we had involuntarily fixed our dearest affections upon things that were impossible—that we knew to be impossible—do you not think that the assumption of in-

difference would then become the wiser philosophy—that, however painful as a task, it would then become a duty?”

There was no mistaking the allusion intended to be conveyed; and yet to Emily there was a mystery attached to it that was wholly incomprehensible. Her thoughts glanced rapidly back through the occurrences of the last two months. The look, the manner, the thousand nameless tokens that had spoken with a truth and an eloquence far more powerful than words—how were these to be reconciled with the impossibilities to which Mandeville had alluded? Could he have been trifling with the affections of her young heart? Could there be truth in the oft-repeated report of his engagement to—but no, Emily was too guileless herself to conceive the possibility of guile

in another. She spurned the idea of *his* falsehood, and was ashamed of her own suspicions.

“Perhaps,” said she, after a moment’s thought, and speaking with some effort, “in such a case as you describe, the assumption of indifference might be wise as regards ourselves, and right towards others ; it might, in fact, become a duty, though one, I think, scarcely possible of fulfilment ; unless, indeed,” she continued, gathering strength as the former suspicion once more flashed through her mind, “unless the object of our affection were proved to be unworthy of it, and then the reality rather than the assumption of indifference would, I should think, become easy—it would then be a duty we owe rather to ourselves than to another.”

Emily had not looked up while she spoke,

lest the calmness of her manner should desert her, for many new and contending feelings were busy at her heart. She sat for some minutes with her eyes silently cast down, and unconscious of the expression of surprise with which Mandeville's looks were fixed on her speaking countenance. There was in the words, or rather, perhaps, in the low, calm tone wherein they had been uttered, a trace of wounded feeling—a shadow of womanly pride (it was *but* a shadow, for never was there a gentler being), such as he had never before remarked, but which could not escape the observation of so practised an adept in woman's heart as he was.

“But if,” replied he, bending his eyes fixedly upon her, “the object of our affection be utterly beyond our reach, and, instead of being found unworthy, it

still presents to us the type of every earthly perfection ? ”

“ Then,” said Emily, and her cheek glowed almost painfully as she spoke, “ I can as little conceive the necessity of assuming an indifference that we do not feel, as I can imagine the possibility of a change in our affections. But you are always putting extreme cases, Mr. Mandeville,” said she, looking up with a smile, and endeavouring to resume her unembarrassed manner, “ simply for the love of argument, I believe, for we generally come to the same conclusion at last.”

“ I believe we do,” replied he, in his usual disengaged tone, for at that moment the door had opened, and Lady Wrexham was announced.

“ Buon giorno, carina,” said she ; “ good



morning, Mr. Mandeville. Carry, come here, I have something for you," and the next moment the children were busily engaged in examining the toys, which but half an hour sooner would have proved so opportune a source of amusement.

"*Mille grazie* for the note you sent me, with its welcome contents," pursued Lady Wrexham, addressing Mandeville. "I have just been to Albemarle Street. Blanche is, I think, looking prettier than ever."

"Do you think so?" said Mandeville, dryly.

"And so, carina, you go to the Grangé to-morrow," she continued, seating herself near Emily's chair. "How long do you mean to hide from us the light of your countenance?"

"We must stay till Monday week, for



the fifteenth is grandpapa's birthday, and he is quite reckoning on having us all with him."

"I am sorry for that. I wanted you all to come and dine with me next week, to meet the Thornhams, who are just arrived from Italy. You will like Blanche Thornham very much. Mr. Mandeville, are you engaged on Thursday?"

How Emily congratulated herself that the chair in which she was seated happened to be placed with its back to the window, for the tell-tale colour had rushed up into her cheek as Lady Wrexham spoke. How thankful she was for the momentary relief afforded by the single question and answer which drew the attention both of Mandeville and her cousin from herself. Whether Lady Wrexham perceived her

change of countenance it would have been difficult to guess from the disengaged manner with which she exchanged the next few sentences with Mandeville on the subject of their mutual friends, and their recent arrival in England; and then, turning to Emily, changed the conversation, and chatted on in her own lively, light-hearted manner.

“You are holding a levee this morning, carina,” said she, as another thundering knock at the door was heard. “What a plague you must find it, to have such a tribe of cousins as we are,” she continued, laughing, as Charles Grenville and his sisters were announced. “Charles, you have not been to see me for a whole week, and I have wanted you sadly to arrange about some pic-nics that we have in contemplation.”

“I am quite at your service, Caroline — only let me know when; and, there’s a good creature, don’t do as you did last time—choose a day when I am sure to be on guard.”

“No, no,” said Lady Wrexham, laughing. “You shall choose the day yourself, if you like. I will let you know when we are about to begin operations. We meet to-night, Emily, of course?”

“Yes;”—and away went Lady Wrexham, accompanied by Mandeville, who felt that his visit had already exceeded all reasonable bounds.

To Emily the remainder of that day was a continued struggle between actual depression and assumed cheerfulness. It was the first effort at self-command that, throughout a life of uninterrupted happiness, she

had ever been called upon to make—the first lesson she had ever learned in the school of that hardest of task-masters, Experience. The conversation of the morning had filled her mind with doubts and perplexities, of which, despite her endeavours to recall over and over again each word that had been spoken, she could discover no probable solution. One of two things seemed certain. Either Mandeville had all along been deceiving her, or some unforeseen obstacle had arisen to frustrate those intentions which she could scarcely doubt that he had once entertained. For though it was true that not a syllable had ever passed his lips that could by any possibility be construed into a formal declaration of love, and that he had never attempted directly to elicit what were her

sentiments with respect to himself, yet had he not addressed her in a language not to be mistaken?—a language far more eloquent and far more touching than that of words. Could not the eye speak?—and the manner, and the very tone of the voice, and the pressure of the hand?—all unseen, unfelt, incomprehensible to others, but how eloquent to her to whom they are addressed! Such had been Mandeville's language, and who so well as he knew how to give it expression?

And could all this have been false? Could it have been assumed only for the heartless purpose of winning her affection, but to cast it aside when won, while his own was pledged to another? Or had Mandeville himself been deceived in the stability of the foundation on which his hopes had

rested. It was in vain that Emily sought in her own mind for any solution of the mystery. The only probable one was that derived from the singular coincidence presented by the unexpected arrival of Blanche Thornham with the conversation of the morning; but the conclusion to which that led was too painful to be dwelt on. To judge from Mandeville's manner, Miss Thornham's arrival had not been wholly unexpected. Had he been deceiving her, too? And in the midst of these doubts and perplexities, Emily was to leave London the following day, on a visit of more than a week to the monotony of the Grange, where, with spirits already sufficiently depressed, her sole occupation would be comprised in listening to old Mr. Fraser's dissertations on the gout, and unpicking

the knots in her grandmother's netting.

That day may with truth be said to have been the first unhappy day of Emily Morton's life. And yet she was compelled to talk gaily with her cousin Charles, and cheerfully to discuss the evening ball with the rest at dinner, and finally to go through her toilet as usual, beneath the prying eyes of Mademoiselle Célestine, for the scene of festivity which would be so little in unison with her own feelings. But scarcely was the important business concluded, when hope once more lighted her torch. Mandeville was to be there. The conversation of the morning had been abruptly broken off by the entrance of Lady Wrexham; probably it might be renewed, and possibly—anything, in short, was preferable to sus-



pense. At least, so thought Emily, as the carriage stopped at Lady Brenton's door, and she nerved herself to meet whatever disappointment fate had in store for her. What a weak and wayward thing is the human heart! Throughout the morning, Emily's mind had been distracted with conjectures as to the probability of Man-deville's generally believed engagement to Miss Thornham, with consequent doubts of his truth, and with resolutions to suspend her judgment, and withhold her preference (alas, poor child, how little she knew her own heart) till it had been proved to have been worthily bestowed. And yet, when the same speaking smile, the same pressure of the hand, the same soft words of whispered greeting, came to welcome her, doubt and uncertainty in an instant vanished.



She remembered only the happiness of being in his presence ; and the recollection was sufficient to banish for the moment every other feeling.

The ball was like other balls ; and Emily's engagements were, as usual, too numerous to admit of her bestowing much conversation on any one person ; and thus, though Mandeville very evidently hovered near her throughout the evening, it was impossible they could exchange more than a passing word, till, in its turn, that especial dance arrived which was exclusively their own. And even then things went very perversely, as they generally do on such occasions. They had still been scarcely able to exchange a word. The next dance was Lord Errington's, and scarcely was it ended, when Mr. Morton's carriage was

announced, for it had been ordered unusually early, in consideration of the journey of the following morning.

Of course his lordship would present his arm to conduct Miss Morton to the carriage, and then farewell to Emily's peace of mind for the next ten days at least. But no. It chanced that at that moment Lord Errington had been beguiled into an unusually animated conversation with Charles Grenville. The Morton party made their exit unobserved, and Emily was already half way to Portland Place ere her absence was discovered.

"Will you forgive me for usurping once more an office that should now more properly belong to another?" whispered Mandeville, as he conducted Emily down stairs.

She looked up inquiringly.

"Surely you cannot misunderstand me," added he.

"There seems to be some strange mistake," ventured Emily, in the same low tone. "I really do *not* understand—"

"No? What became of your cavalier after the last quadrille, that *I* am permitted this happiness?"

"Oh, you are mistaken—quite mistaken," interrupted Emily, quickly.

She felt as though a load had been removed from her heart. It was evident that Mandeville had been misled by the report of her engagement to Lord Errington. How she blamed herself for her own suspicions—how unjust to suppose that he could have deceived her!

"I fancied I had offended," pursued Mandeville, in the same soft, low tone.

“ Offended ?—why should you suppose so ? ” and she looked up with one of her own beautiful bright smiles.

“ No matter, since I was mistaken,” and a gentle pressure of the arm that rested on his concluded the sentence. All was as it had been between them.

“ You will be absent a week ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ An age, rather,” and the next moment the carriage drove off.

Mandeville went back into the cloak-room for his hat. He felt it impossible to return to the gay scene he had just quitted, though Strauss was lending to it all his inspiration. He hurried forth into the cool night air, for there was a fever in his brain, a restless longing for free space, an impatience to be alone with thoughts un-

broken by the glare, and glitter, and glad sounds, which are but dissonance to the ear when the heart can find no echo for them. It was a lovely night in May, and Mandeville, unconscious of the flight of time, continued pacing up and down the pavement in Berkeley Square, inhaling the odour of the mignonette with which the different balconies were perfumed. Suddenly an equipage dashed past him. It was that of Lord Errington, on his way homewards. Mandeville drew a long breath as he stopped short in his walk, and gazed after it, but the next moment a proud smile passed over his fine features.

“How could I ever dream that it was possible—I might have known her better,” was the reflection that accompanied it; but the smile had passed, and a deep sigh

escaped him, as he crossed the square on his way homewards, for the carriages were now rolling rapidly away from Lady Brenton's ball, and Mandeville did not care to encounter the observations of those who were within them.

## CHAPTER XIV.

IT was a sweet, bright morning in May, when Mr. Morton's carriage passed forth from the heated atmosphere of London into the fresh country air, on its road into ——shire; and how perfectly were Emily's feelings in unison with the smiling landscape, and the brilliant sunlight which was gilding every object around her. The passing depression to which the conversa-

tion of the previous morning had given rise, now that it was dispelled, served but to increase the intensity of her present enjoyment. Her momentary doubt of Mandeville's truth, now that by his own lips it had been set at rest, tended only to strengthen her trusting reliance on his affection. Emily felt that she owed him some amends for those suspicions. She owed him far more in return for the rich gift of his affection—he whose acknowledged superiority would have entitled him to choose at will from amid all the fair faces that wreathed themselves in smiles at his approach. She was quite sure she should like Blanche Thornham amazingly. She had frequently heard Lady Wrexham speak of her with affection, and of her reported engagement to Mandeville; but she smiled



at the idea now, for had he not himself disproved it by his conduct—nay, even by his words? All these reflections were very delightful; and Emily, completely absorbed in them, leaned back in the corner of the carriage, while the summer breeze fanned her cheek, and the sunlight was in her heart; and thus she went on silently forming plans for Blanche's amusement when they should all return to London.

“I do not think your grandfather will complain this time of the evil effects of London dissipation, Emily,” said Mrs. Morton, as she looked on her daughter's bright and blooming countenance. “I could almost fancy you had been on the hills for a month, you look so well this morning.”

“Do I, mamma? I am very glad to

hear it. But suppose we order the carriage back to town," said she, laughing. "Why should I stay here, wasting my sweetness on the desert air, when I might be so much more profitably employed there?"

"You are unreasonable," said Mrs. Morton, leaning back in the carriage, with a smile of gratified vanity at the recollection of her daughter's success; "you have done pretty well, I think, in that way for one season; so now be merciful, and rest content with the number of your victims—as I am."

"And most assuredly as I am too," echoed Emily. "My dear mamma, if they had all been as silent as Lord Errington, or as talkative as the little comte, what would have become of me?"

The carriage stopped just then to change horses, which snapped the thread of the conversation; and both mother and daughter fell into a reverie which lasted nearly unbroken throughout the remainder of the journey. Mrs. Morton was dreaming of coronets, settlements, and *trousseaux*, while Emily's thoughts were fixed on an object far less glittering indeed, but to her infinitely more attractive than the wealth of the Indies. She knew that Mandeville was poor—but what did that matter? Lady Emmeline had contrived to live abroad on an income of a few hundreds a-year, and why should not they? Or if Mandeville preferred a residence in England, there could be no difficulty in finding one suited to their limited means, with the usual accompaniments of roses and woodbines, and

perpetual sunshine without, and the still brighter light of the beloved presence within.

Such were the smiling prospects wherewith Emily's thoughts were employed, during the first few days of her visit to the Grange, while Mrs. Morton was at the same time silently calculating the probable length of time that would terminate Lord Errington's courtship, and see her daughter installed a viscountess. All this she privately communicated to Mr. and Mrs. Fraser, and received their congratulations thereon; but between Emily and herself the subject had never been seriously discussed, the truth being that each considered the affair as settled according to their different modes of thinking. Mrs. Morton would as soon have dreamed of the possibility of Lord Erring-

ton being refused, as Emily could have conceived the possibility of accepting him ; and thus, whenever her grandmother whispered the oft-repeated observation, “ And so, Emmy, dear child, we are going to have a wedding soon,” or that her grandfather, as she sat chatting beside his gouty chair, suddenly turned and gazed in her sweet face, and then, stroking back her long silken curls, prayed “ God to bless her, and make her a happy wife,” it was to Mandeville that her thoughts involuntarily turned with a proud and happy feeling of satisfaction at the approval which she fancied had been thus tacitly expressed.

It had been arranged that the Morton family should remain till the commencement of the following week at the Grange, after being present at the celebration of Mrs.

Fraser's seventy-fifth birthday ; but on the very day preceding it, the old gentleman was attacked with so violent a fit of gout, that Mrs. Morton was induced to curtail her visit, and the whole party accordingly returned to London some days sooner than they had originally intended, and reached home just in time for dinner, on the day of Lady Langley's concert, to which they had previously been engaged.

“How do you feel disposed about going to Lady Langley's to-night, Emily?” said Mrs. Morton, as they all went up into the drawing-room, after dinner. “Are you too tired, or shall we go?”

“If *you* are not too tired, I should like it, of all things, mamma.”

“Then we will go, dear,” and Mrs. Morton went to dress, thinking of Lord Erring-

ton, and of the days that had been lost during their absence; while Emily was arraying herself in unadorned white muslin, because Mandeville, who was, she knew, engaged to Lady Langley's, too, had once expressed a preference for that simple attire.

The Mortons were late. The concert had begun, and the rooms were already crowded when they arrived. A seat by Lady Wrexham was procured for Mrs. Morton, while Emily, unwilling to encounter the heat of the rooms, was very well content to remain standing near the door under the care of Sir William Wrexham, with whom she was an especial favourite.

"You have chosen a sadly untenable position, my dear Miss Morton," said he, observing that every fresh arrival subjected



her to renewed inconvenience ; and having, with some difficulty, insinuated a chair into a vacant corner, Emily very gladly ensconced herself therein, to enjoy the repose which her morning's journey rendered doubly acceptable. The niche in which she was placed was in a small antechamber, forming the entrance to the whole suite of apartments, and adjoining the principal drawing-room, in which the musical performance was going on, and thus situated, it served as a very convenient lounging-place, not only for the latecomers, but also for those who might wish to indulge in a little gossip, which a nearer vicinity to the music would have rendered inadmissible. As Emily leaned back in her chair, very well content to remain unobserved, and be spared the trouble of conversation, till fate should send her some one



of sufficient interest to render the exertion no longer distasteful, she became, of course, the auditor of remarks as varied as the elements which such a scene might be supposed to have assembled together.

“Anything new to-night?” inquired a tall, thin, and once handsome man, who had worn himself to a thread paper in digesting the corn laws, of a young member in his first season, who had just hurried away from the House to catch a glimpse of his lady-love at Lady Langley’s.

“Ministers are in a minority of thirty.”

“The deuce they are! Humph!” But before the surprise occasioned by the information had subsided sufficiently to admit of a second question, the informant had already made his escape to the opposite side of the

room, and had forgotten House, ministers, minority, and all.

“How tirethome thethe conthert are; don’t you think tho, Mothiu de Cluny,” lisped little Miss Brenton, as she made her escape from the music room, on the arm of Emily’s former lover, who was endeavouring to console himself with the prospect of her thirty thousand pounds for his unsuccessful attack on the *purse* of Mademoiselle Emilie; for the poor little attaché, who had but very lately come to England, had nursed his first-love in the belief that Mr. Morton’s fine property would, after the fashion ‘of France, be equally inherited by all his children, and the disappointment of his hopes at so brilliant a prospect had therefore been proportionally severe.

“You are fatigued, Mademoiselle,” re-

plied the little attaché, in answer to Miss Brenton's remark, which her imperfect pronunciation, and his own imperfect knowledge of the English language, prevented his fully comprehending, and he looked round in search of a vacant seat, but in vain.

"Oh, dear no; it's very nithe here," replied the young lady, still retaining possession of de Cluny's arm, for his countship, with the addition of broken English, well turned moustaches, and still better turned compliments, was becoming a very interesting object.

"Nithe," thought the attaché. "Que diable veut-elle dire? Mademoiselle parle Français, sans doute?" continued he, aloud.

"Oh, yeth; but I should be afraid to

thpeak with you, Mothieu de Cluny ; I'm thure you'd laugh at me."

"Mais, mademoiselle, you tink very bad of me, I am afraid," pursued the attaché, endeavouring to look tenderly into the young lady's eyes, but they had fallen immovably on her fan, as she replied :—

"No, indeed, Mothieu de Cluny, I do not. I'm thure if you with me to thpeak Frenth, I'll try—but—really—vraiment the vouth athure—th'ai thi horriblement poor," and she stopped short, unable to proceed further.

"Mais, mademoiselle, vous parlez comme un ange," exclaimed the little comte, with great animation. "Que les Anglaises sont bê—e—tes!" was the silent rejoinder to the young lady's attempted compliance with his request.

“Oh, pray let uth talk English,” continued she; “I like so muth to hear you—it ith tho pretty,” and de Cluny, accustomed only to the frigidity of his own Parisian young ladies, who are expected to be silent till they marry, and the reverse for ever after, and nothing daunted by his recent defeat in the case of Miss Morton, went on massacring English, and “talking pretty,” under the favorable auspices which Miss Brenton’s manner seemed to promise.

All this would have been infinitely amusing to Emily, had she been at that moment in a frame of mind to be amused by anything. The tall, thin victim to the corn-laws, absorbed in the speculations to which the defeat of ministers had given birth, had unconsciously planted himself exactly before her, so that she was left unobserved to

watch every fresh arrival, and listen to every voice that approached, with a feeling of oft-renewed disappointment, that was gradually giving place to doubts and conjectures still more painful. Had Mandeville been already arrived, he must have seen Mrs. Morton, who was seated with Lady Wrexham in a conspicuous part of the principal saloon, and would no doubt have long since made his way to her own side. It was strange that he should be so late, for she knew his love for music, and Lady Langley's was of the first order, and he had expressly told her he was to be there. So Emily pursued her scrutiny as each fresh guest arrived, too thankful for the shelter which permitted her to do so without interruption, and without betraying the feelings which each fresh disappointment

occasioned. At last, she heard the cheerful voice of her cousin, Charles Grenville ; but the little antechamber was too crowded to admit of his approaching very near, and Emily gladly drew herself back to escape his eye ; for, at that moment, his playful raillery would have been peculiarly unwelcome.

“ You are late, my dear fellow,” said he, addressing Sir Geoffrey Charlton, who had just lounged in.

“ Couldn’t get away sooner—had Errington dining with me at Brookes’s.”

“ Upon my honour, you have had an immense loss. This new singer, what’s her name ? ”

“ Alboni, do you mean ? ”

“ Yes, yes—she has just made her exit, after transporting us all to the seventh



heaven ; you are just five minutes too late."

"She *is* a divine creature," said Sir Geoffrey, affectedly. "Errington and I looked in at the opera as we came by. We had a great mind to stay, for she goes back for the remainder of the opera."

"Is Lord Errington here?"

"He is coming. I left him speaking to Mandeville, and hurried away in the hope of being in time for Alboni's two songs."

"Ah, Mandeville is not here, by the bye ; but, I suppose, nothing could move him from his stall to-night. What a fanatico the fellow is. I should think it almost a misfortune to be such a connoisseur. I do not believe he could enjoy anything, that was not first-rate."

"I believe so ; but Mandeville is the



luckiest fellow in the world, he always seems to find things that come up to his standard of perfection. To-night he seemed to forget there was any such thing as music in the world, so entirely was he taken up talking to the prettiest girl I ever beheld in my life."

"That must have been the girl to whom they say he is engaged. She *is* pretty—uncommonly pretty. We all dined together at Lady Wrexham's on 'Thursday, and Mandeville was her most devoted the whole evening. It seems quite a decided case."

"She is as beautiful as a *houri*," exclaimed Sir Geoffrey, "and I am told as rich as Cræsus—a Miss Thornham—is it not? At least, I think that was the name Errington told me."

"Yes, an Irish girl—a great friend of

the Wrexhams. It would be a capital thing for Mandeville. They say she has a hundred thousand pounds, and I don't know that she could bestow it better, for he is a monstrous nice fellow."

"I know very little of him myself," answered Sir Geoffrey, who was not particularly fond of hearing other people praised.

"Poor Emily! How thankful she was for the obscurity in which she had accidentally been placed. A faint sickness was stealing over her—a tightening of the heart—a suspension of respiration which threatened to become quite overpowering. But she made an effort to subdue her feelings, and she succeeded. In a few moments she was again listening calmly, but with an ear strained to catch every sound, to the conversation around her, though her cheek,

which a moment before had been violently flushed, was now pale and cold as marble.

“What will Lady Emmeline say to it?” were the first words that reached her when she was sufficiently collected to comprehend the meaning of a sentence.

“I suppose Lady Emmeline approves the match. At least, I hear it was talked of long ago at Naples, and she made no objection to it then; and, besides, Mandeville’s word with her is law. Whatever he wishes, she will accede to.”

“I declare I do not see what anybody could object to,” said Sir Geoffrey, who was secretly resolving to fling a fraction of his own heart at the feet of the lovely heiress. “Who is she? Where does she come from?”

“For the who, you must ask Lady Wrex-

ham. I only know her as Blanche Thornham, the prettiest girl in London; and I believe I might add, one of the richest, too. I had some idea at one time of entering the lists with Mandeville myself—she is a prize worth striving for, but the case seems so hopeless, I shall give it up.”

“So will not I,” thought Sir Geoffrey, who had omitted to add that he had looked in at Crockford’s on his way from the opera, and had found himself some seven thousand pounds poorer than he had imagined.

“I must know this paragon, Grenville,” continued he, aloud. “When will you go through the form of presentation for me?”

“To-morrow, if you like, at the gardens. Shall you be there?”

“Yes; I will call for you, if you like, in my cab at five,” and Sir Geoffrey passed on.

It was not more than a minute afterwards that Sir William Wrexham succeeded in making his way to the spot where Emily was seated.

“Caroline has sent me for you,” said he; “she is quite uneasy at your being here all alone. But surely you are ill, my dear Miss Morton,” exclaimed he, suddenly struck with the paleness of her countenance. “How grieved I am to have quitted you.”

“I believe the heat overpowered me,” said Emily, faintly.

“Take my arm, and trust yourself to my guidance.” And Emily very gladly rose, and, taking Sir William’s proffered support, allowed him to lead her towards the door.

“I am better—I am quite well now,” said she, as they passed into the refreshment room.

Lord Errington was there, standing near the table as they entered, talking to Sir Geoffrey Charlton.

“Upon my honour, the prettiest girl in London,” said Sir Geoffrey, in continuation of a previous conversation, and without perceiving that anyone but themselves was present.

“Too foreign to please me,” answered his lordship, in his own quiet tone. “Those foreign manners would spoil the prettiest Englishwoman in the world.”

“Your lordship is fastidious; but I must acknowledge you have a right to be so, though on this occasion we cannot yield the palm of beauty to the same person,” said Sir Geoffrey, with that peculiar enunciation which rendered his manner so pre-eminentlly disagreeable.

Lord Errington drew himself up to his full height, but made no reply, and at that moment Sir William Wrexham filled a glass of water for Emily, which caused the two young men suddenly to turn round, and perceive that they were not alone. Sir Geoffrey Charlton took refuge in a glass of champagne; Lord Errington coloured, and looked somewhat confused, but the next minute he was by Emily's side, with an animated expression of anxiety on his countenance, such as he never before had manifested.

“Was Miss Morton ill? Could he be of any use? Could he look for the carriage? In short, what could he do?”

“Thank you; I am a great deal better now,” said Emily, forcing a smile. “But I believe I had better return home. If you



will be so kind, Sir William," and as Sir Geoffrey Charlton vanished from the apartment, and Sir William went in search of Mrs. Morton, Emily found herself thus singularly left under the charge of her usually silent admirer.

But a change seemed to have come over the spirit of his dream. Lord Errington was silent still, but his countenance was so no longer. The most anxious interest spoke in every line of it; and as Emily raised her eyes when she replied to his single inquiry, the expression was too marked to be mistaken. For the first time in her life, she felt grateful for Lord Errington's attention. It was at once kind, soothing, and unobtrusive; and though nothing that he could say or do could at that moment have mitigated the pain-



fulness of her feeling, and though, had he then laid his broad lands and his coronet at her feet, she would unhesitatingly have refused them, yet still she could not but remember with gratitude how long his homage, all silent and unpretending as it was, had been exclusively devoted to herself, nor forbear the painful comparison which the circumstances of the moment might naturally be supposed to call forth. We are never so sensible of kindness as when the heart has been recently lacerated by its reverse.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE following day was Sunday—not the Sabbath, for the Sabbath implies a day of rest, whereas Sunday, to a large portion of the gay London world, implies too often 'a day of toil, or at best of weariness. Ah, that it were oftener regarded, as in truth it should be, as a solemn pause in the journey of life, wherein to reckon up our shortcomings for the past week, and to gather

up our strength for the trials of that which is to come. Six days of the week are appropriated to amusement—and let them be so. It is not to be supposed that we are endowed with so many varied capabilities of enjoyment, and yet are denied the privilege of exercising them ; but surely, where our hours of pleasure are so many, it were no such irksome task to set apart a few—a very few hours for thoughts of a more serious nature, on that one remaining seventh day which has been appointed as a day of rest equally to ourselves and to all those over whom we are set in authority, and which, as God's Sabbath, we have been expressly commanded to “keep holy.”

It was Sunday. Mrs. Morton was fatigued after her journey of the previous day, succeeded as it had been by the

evening's amusement. So was Emily, and with better reason still, for both mind and body were ill at ease. They sat down together to a late breakfast, for Mr. Morton, with Charles and the children, was gone to church.

"My dear child, how pale you are," said Mrs. Morton, as she handed Emily her cup of tea. "I really think I must send for Dereham after breakfast to see you."

"Oh, no, my dear mamma, I must beg you will not," said Emily. "I assure you there is nothing in the world the matter with me. I only feel very tired this morning."

"But what can have tired you so much, love?"

"My journey, I suppose; and then the rooms were so hot last night, and—"

“ But you have had a good night’s rest since then, which ought to have refreshed you,” persisted Mrs. Morton. “ Indeed, if you are not better towards evening, you must see Dr. Dereham.”

“ Well—yes, my dear mamma, if I am not better, which I know I shall be. The truth is, I have not had a good night’s rest. I believe I was too tired to sleep till towards morning, and then I slept so heavily that I am scarcely awake yet.”

“ Well, I shall see how you are in the course of the day,” said Mrs. Morton, somewhat reassured. “ Let me see what news I can find here to awake you with,” and she took up the last number of the *Court Journal*, and began cutting the leaves, as Emily sat lingering over her breakfast. “ I do not believe that we have lost anything

particularly agreeable by being absent this week ; but Caroline tells me there are a great many pleasant things in contemplation. Let me see. Oh, here is Lady Brenton's second ball announced for the sixteenth ; and next, ' We understand there is to be a *fête* shortly at D—— House, on a scale of unusual magnificance.' I am very glad to have seen that, Emmy ; we must go to Vouillant's to-morrow, to consult her about our dresses, or she will be too busy to make them. Pray do not let us forget it."

" I have never worn that beautiful white dress that you gave me, but once, mamma ; will not that do ? " interposed Emily, who was at that moment just in the mood not to care how she looked.

" No, indeed, it will not ; you must have

a new one. I am particularly anxious you should look well that night," and Mrs. Morton, after a momentary pause, during which the possibility of converting the princely owner of D—— House into a marrying man, after all, floated vaguely through her mind, read on, "'Lady Courtney is about to give another *déjeûné dansant* at her beautiful villa in the Regent's Park.' We must take care to be earlier the next time, Emily," and again she read on, without having perceived the sigh that had replied to her observation. "'Lord Thomas Grantham, who has lately purchased Mrs. Andover's beautiful yacht, the Ariel, is about to make an excursion to the Archipelago.' Poor man! if he should chance to be drowned by the way, you will have his death to answer for, Emily. And now,

what is this? Here really *is* something that will awake you, I think," and Mrs. Morton looked up, while a smile of peculiar meaning played over her whole countenance.

"What is it, my dear mamma?" said Emily, listlessly sipping her tea, for at that moment, with the inexperience of a first disappointment, she fancied that nothing on earth could ever interest her again. "It appears to be something that pleases you very much."

"It does please me very much. Can you not at all guess, then, what it is about?"

"No, indeed, mamma," replied Emily, in the same listless tone as before, while a slight blush tinged her cheek, for, unconsciously, every subject was connected in her mind with the one prevailing object of her thoughts.



“ Shall I read it, then ? ”

“ Pray, do.”

“ ‘ We understand—that Viscount Errington—only son of the Earl of Trentham—is about to lead to the hymeneal altar—the beautiful and accomplished — Miss Morton.’ ”

“ Good heavens ! ” exclaimed Emily, almost starting from the seat, “ who could have been so absurd as to circulate such a report ? I really am very much vexed, for, of course every one will think—”

“ That Lord Errington himself circulated it,” interposed Mrs. Morton, as quietly as possible.

“ Lord Errington, mamma ? The proudest, the most uncommunicative of human beings ! oh, no—impossible.”

“ Well, his conduct, then ; his attentions

for the last two months, which come to exactly the same thing."

"His attentions, mamma! I do not believe that we have ever exchanged a dozen sentences."

"He has never exchanged three with any girl in London but yourself."

"How tiresome it is that people will interfere in what does not concern them," exclaimed Emily, who, for the very first time in her life, was thoroughly out of sorts. Her heart was a strange chaos at that moment. She was deeply wounded at Mandeville's conduct; but still she could not endure the thought of his seeing the public announcement of her engagement to his cousin. And Lord Errington's regard—Lord Errington's good opinion—what mattered they to her? Still she was exceedingly

vexed at the possibility of his supposing that the *affiche* had been published for the mere purpose of entrapping him into a proposal. And yet, after all, of what import to her could be the feelings or opinions of either on the subject? Both were, of course, matters of perfect indifference; or, at least, if they were not so now, Emily very resolutely determined that they should be. As to Mr. Mandeville, she had nothing to do but to think no more about him; and for Lord Errington, with his shy manners and disposition, it was very unlikely that, after seeing his name thus publicly blazoned forth, it would ever come to a proposal; but if it did, she had only to decline the honour intended her, and the matter would end.

“Well, Emily,” said Mrs. Morton, who

had been all this time turning over the leaves of the *Court Journal*, though, in truth, she had seen very little of its contents, so entirely were her thoughts absorbed in the gratifying announcement that therein had been made known to the world at large. "Well, my dear child," said she, smiling and laying down the paper, "I think I have allowed a very reasonable time for your indignation to exhaust itself. Have these tiresome, officious people, with their unexpected announcement, awoken you at last?"

"Perfectly, mamma."

"I think it very probable," pursued Mrs. Morton, more gravely, "that this will rather hasten matters with Lord Errington. He will never let it rest long after this."

"I think not," said Emily, quietly. "He

will most probably have it contradicted next week."

"He will more probably have it confirmed," emended Mrs. Morton. "Did not Vouillant tell us," continued she, observing that Emily remained silent, "that she should have Lady Harriet Carleton's *trousseau* ready this week."

"Did she? Yes, I believe so. I think I remember something about it."

"We must ask to see it to-morrow. I am told it is to be very beautiful, which is exceedingly absurd, by the bye, with her small fortune, and marrying a poor attaché, with little more than six hundred a-year."

"But Mr. Vandeleur goes to his post at the French court immediately on his marriage, mamma," pleaded Emily.

“Does he? Oh, very likely; but still Lady Harriet’s position will be very different from yours, dear,” said Mrs. Morton, giving utterance to the rapid flow of thought which was passing through her brain. “It is quite proper that your *trousseau* should be very handsome, which, I confess, I do not think at all requisite for hers.”

“My dear mamma,” exclaimed Emily, startled into animation by the cool, matter-of-course manner in which Mrs. Morton was disposing both of Lord Errington and herself, “you surely are not in earnest?”

“Perfectly in earnest,” interrupted Mrs. Morton, with a gratified smile. “I am so convinced of Lord Errington’s intentions—ah, you need not shake your head, dear; I understand these things a great deal better

than you do. I am so certain about it, that—now do not be startled at what I am going to say—I shall certainly write to-morrow to Brussels, about your wedding-dress and veil. I am quite determined you shall have them; and you know of old how tedious those people are.”

“But Lord Errington has never given us the least reason to suppose that he has any intentions of the kind,” pleaded Emily, once more. “When he does, it will be quite time enough.”

“Indeed it will not. *Laissez moi faire, mon enfant.* We need not, of course, talk of these things to all the world; that would be very unwise. And by the bye, while I think of it, do not, on any account, let Célestine know that I have written. She will carry it down straight into



the servants' hall, and we shall have it half over London before to-morrow night."

"But, my dear mamma," began Emily.

She was interrupted by a knock at the door, which sounded close beside them.

"It is only the children coming home from church," said Mrs. Morton, after reconnoitering at the window, "and Charles Grenville with them."

"Then I shall make my escape," said Emily, who felt quite unequal to encounter her gay cousin at that moment; and as Mrs. Morton met and accompanied the party upstairs into the drawing-room, Emily darted into her own room, and there, after closing and fastening the door, she threw herself into a chair, and burst into an agony of tears. It was but five minutes



since she had resolved to think no more of Mandeville, or, if she thought of him at all, to do so with indifference. Oh, the vanity of human resolutions !

## CHAPTER XVI.

PRECISELY at five o'clock, Mrs. Thornham's very handsome equipage (for, with the assistance of Mandeville and Lady Wrexham, she had already succeeded in establishing one of the most approved taste) was at Crawley's door, to convey herself and her daughter to the Zoological Gardens. Mandeville had been awaiting its arrival for the last half hour, chatting the while with

Blanche, to whom he had assigned the softer patronymic of "La bella Bianca," while Charles Grenville, who had just dropped in, was good naturedly devoting himself to Mrs. Thornham, being, as he himself said, determined to let Mandeville have fair play ; and if, with such immense odds in his favour, he should, after all, fail in his attack on the heart of the heiress, why, then, it would be fair enough that he should try his luck with the rest.

"What a confounded shame it is, Charlton," said he, as Sir Geoffrey was driving him up to the Regent's Park, where the promised presentation was to take place ; "here we are all going deliberately to make a target of that pretty girl's heart, without caring a straw for anything but the gold in which it is set. I suspect, however, that

not one of us will strike the bull's eye, after all."

"Upon my honour, my dear fellow, you are very much mistaken," said Sir Geoffrey; "instead of being a confounded shame, as you say, by all accounts the purse is exceedingly well worth the trouble of winning; but if you don't think so, be off like a good fellow, and leave the coast clear for those who do."

"Not I, truly," said Grenville, laughing; "I yield precedence to Mandeville, but to no one else."

"You are very magnanimous, I must say, when, if one may judge from what I saw last night, the case is already decided."

"What a bore it must be," observed Charles Grenville, "to a woman that is born an heiress, to be pestered by a set of

fellows who are perpetually flinging themselves at her feet like a set of beggars, just for what they can get. If I were an heiress, I'll be hanged if I would not cut them all."

"Not you, indeed; you would do just like the rest of them. There is nothing women like so well as to have us at their feet by dozens at a time. Besides, it keeps their hand in in the flirting way. I never knew an heiress that was not a flirt, and I never knew a flirt who did not end by making a fool of herself."

"I agree with you that flirts always make fools of themselves, while they think they are making fools of us, and often burn their own fingers into the bargain. But all women are not flirts, no, nor all heiresses neither."

"Pretty nearly so."

“’Pon honour, I’ll post you if you go on abusing women after this fashion. I’ll ruin your credit with all the heiresses in the kingdom. I’ll bring them all down to freezing point when they look at you.”

“Ha, ha, ha!—why, my dear fellow, I could destroy the best-laid scheme that ever was thought of in an hour. Do you not know that heiresses are the most gullible set of beings on the face of the earth? They all fancy themselves mighty wise, and talk a great deal about fortune-hunters, and marrying for love, and so forth, till some one happens to come in the way, who has *nous* enough to bring a sufficient battery of sighs, and looks, and soft speeches into the field to carry the day, and then it is all up with them. They fancy the poor devil is over head and ears in love with their own

sweet self, and out of pure pity surrender, at discretion, for better, for worse."

"Thank God, my sisters are not heir-esses," exclaimed Charles Grenville, with great emphasis.

"Amen, my dear fellow, and it so please you. 'Tis a prodigiously troublesome post, I must allow. But, after all, do you not think that we men, elder brothers, and other such notables, I mean, have quite as bad a life of it? If a girl have plenty of money, she has men at her feet by the dozen; but she has, at least, the privilege of cutting them all afterward if she choose it; but it is different with one of us. When a poor fellow is worth the trouble of looking after, he has hearts enough flung at his head to drive him crazy, and there is no escape from it, go where he will. Women

like to be run after ; but it is a monstrous bore to us—which is the worse case of the two then, do you think ? ”

“ ’Pon honour, I don’t know. You must be the best judge, for you can speak feelingly on the subject, which I, not being among the notables, cannot.”

“ There is Errington, for instance,” continued Sir Geoffrey, without having perceived the little stroke of satire concealed in Grenville’s speech, “ what the deuce has the fellow to recommend him except his position, and yet there is not a mother in London that has not her eye fixed on the seven balls in his coronet, as though the head beneath it were the most interesting object in the creation. It is no wonder that he is dumbfounded, and fairly stared out of countenance.”



“Fair play is a jewel,” said Grenville.  
“If Errington’s head were on one block, and Miss Thornham’s on the other, which do you think would have the most darts levelled at it?”

“The blockhead with its coronet, or the beauty without it. Six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, I should think.”

“I believe so; Errington’s, however, is not such a bad head; and what is more, I think him a devilish good-looking fellow.”

“Downright spoony, more than half a fool,” said Sir Geoffrey, in his affected tone.

“But I beg pardon, I had forgotten,” he continued, “Errington is to become your relation soon, is he not?”

“Not that I know of—they have not let me into the secret. If he is, as you say, a

spoony and a fool," said Grenville, laughing, "I hope not. My pretty cousin is too good for that."

"With Trentham Abbey, the earldom, and forty thousand a year—eh?"

"I know Emily Morton well. She would not give a rush for them all, unless she liked the man. My word for it, she would refuse him."

"All I can say is, then, that Miss Morton deserves to be reckoned the eighth wonder of the world. There is not another woman in all London that would not bestow her own fair hand, with a low curtsy, on the veriest blockhead in existence, in exchange for such settlements, and pin money, and diamond necklaces, and all that sort of thing, as Errington can give her."

"You have a precious opinion of the better half of the creation," said Charles Grenville, who, but for his perfect good temper, would have felt disposed to quarrel with the coxcombry of his companion.

"Because I know them well," replied Sir Geoffrey. "Women are very pretty play-things when one has nothing better to do. Take them out of their proper vocation, and they are little better than fools."

"They might at least return the compliment," was Charles Grenville's rejoinder.

"Who are you bowing to?" inquired Sir Geoffrey, as a carriage drove past them.

"To a woman—a fool—to Miss Thornham."

"Ha, ha, ha! very good, very good indeed. You hit me hard there. I dare-

say *she* is an exception, however;" and Sir Geoffrey touched his horse with the whip, that no time might be lost in achieving his presentation to the heiress.

"Who is down stairs, Célestine?" inquired Emily Morton, as she unfastened the door to give entrance to her smart little French *soubrette*.

"C'est Milidi Wrexham, mademoiselle."

"No one else."

"Non, mademoiselle. Tout le monde est parti."

"No one but Monsieur Grenville, mademoiselle, et Milord Errington."

"Did Lord Errington come in?"

"Non, mademoiselle."

"Oh, because you said tout le monde."

"Pardon, mademoiselle. Il n'y a eu que Monsieur Grenville ce matin," and Céles-

tine stood waiting a moment for further orders.

“Mademoiselle désire-t-elle quelque chose ?”

“Rien, Célestine,” and off went the *femme de chambre* to communicate her comments on mademoiselle’s pale cheeks, which, as a French woman, she instinctively attributed to something in fact very like the truth.

“He has not been here then,” thought Emily; “and yet surely he must know from Caroline that we are returned,” and the big tears rushed once more to her eyes, despite all her efforts to restrain them. “At least he shall not despise me,” thought she again; “he shall never know how weak and foolish I have been,” and dashing away her tears, she rose, poured a

little water into the glass which stood on the dressing-table near her, and, after adding a few drops of essence, drank it off.

“And now, to play my part as I best may,” continued she, as she stood for a few moments gathering courage for the effort. “I told him that the task of indifference would be easy, and he at least shall never discover that I find it otherwise,” and in a few minutes Emily had sufficiently recovered her composure to descend into the drawing-room, and meet Lady Wrexham as usual.

“You are just in time, carina,” said she, “to prevent my making an incursion on you upstairs. I was resolved not to go away without seeing as well as hearing how you were to-day.”

“ Oh, I am much better, dear, thank you—quite well, I should rather say.”

“ You are looking very pale, Emily, still,” said Mrs Morton. “ I wish you would let me send for Dereham.”

“ Not for the world, mamma. I assure you I never felt better in my life than at this moment.”

“ Caroline and I were talking of the Thornhams when you came in,” said Mrs. Morton, totally unconscious of the pain she was inflicting. “ I think we must go and call on them to-morrow.”

“ Miss Thornham is very pretty, is she not ? ” said Emily, leaning back in her chair, and curling one of her sunny ringlets round her finger with an effort at carelessness.

“ Very pretty, and the most unaffected, open-hearted creature in the world,” said



Lady Wrexham, who, prepared perhaps by Sir William's hint, in a moment perceived that all was not right. "I wish, my dear aunt," she continued, turning to Mrs. Morton, "that, instead of sending for Dr. Dereham, you would persuade Emily to come out with me in the carriage for an hour. A little air will do her more good than anything. Do, carina. I cannot bear to see you with those pale cheeks. Go, and put on your things, and we will drive up to the Park. You know we need not go into the gardens unless you like it."

"And if I should take it into my head to like it?" said Emily, smiling.

"Then we will go;" and Emily rang for Célestine, and went to put on the identical white bonnet in which Mandeville had told her she looked better than in anything



else, while all the time she had fully persuaded herself that she cared as little about her own looks as for his opinion regarding them.

## CHAPTER XVII.

IN one particular, Emily had done Mandeville wrong. He was not aware that she was returned from the Grange, and had he been so, would most assuredly have been 'at his accustomed post in Portland Place. But he thought her still some fifty miles distant from London, and what was there then to prevent his whiling away the morning with "La bella Bianca," or, afterwards, his ac-

cepting a seat in Mrs. Thornham's carriage, and becoming her *cicerone* through the unknown regions of the Zoological Babel, and, in short, his doing all that Mandeville knew so well how to do, to make the hours pass as pleasantly as possible, both to them and to himself.

“What a dingy, dismal looking place this London is on a Sunday,” exclaimed Blanche, as they drove through one of the long, cheerless, monotonous streets that terminate in the glories of the Regent's Park; for Blanche, who was a Roman Catholic, and had, besides, resided many years on the continent, was accustomed to regard the return of Sunday as the signal for unusual joyousness and festivity. “Do they always shut up the shops here on Sunday?”

“Always.”

“Good gracious!—why it looks like a general mourning, or the plague, or something equally dreadful.”

“Well, well,” said Mrs. Thornham, looking a little grave, for Blanche’s volatility, both of manner and opinion, had on more occasions than one been a subject of much uneasiness to her, “if we can find nothing worse to find fault with in England than these Sunday regulations, I think we need not complain.”

“Oh, no, certainly,” said Blanche, in the same gay tone. “It is all very right and proper, I am sure; but it seems so odd after coming from the continent.”

Blanche had unconsciously given utterance to a more important truth than she was aware of.

But if Miss Thornham thought the rest of London dingy, dismal, and disagreeable, she was proportionably surprised and delighted with the brilliant display which manifested itself from the moment the carriage passed into the Regent's Park. Equipages of every description, many of them of rich and costly magnificence, passed and repassed at every moment. It was evident that if the stir of business were suspended, the stir of pleasure was not so. Although the secondary classes, who had been labouring throughout the week, had now shut up their shops, and gone forth to the double indulgence of their one day of rest and recreation, it was very evident that those classes to whom amusement constitutes the sole business of life, were no ways disposed in like manner to rest from

*their* labours    The Zoological Babel, as a Sunday kill-time, was then at the very zenith of its popularity; and so great was the throng of carriages that it was a considerable time ere that of Mrs. Thornham could thread its way to the focus of attraction. This was so far convenient, that it afforded Sir Geoffrey Charlton and Charles Grenville an opportunity of reaching the gate, on foot, in time to assist in conducting Mrs. Thornham and her daughter through the crowd, by which the entrance into the gardens was besieged.

“Now, Charlton, we will start fair,” said Charles, with a light laugh, as they stood together, waiting till the carriage should draw up. “*You* shall take care of Mrs. Thornham—the nurse, for the sake of the child, which is always more than half the

battle—and leave me to the forlorn hope of the young lady—eh—will that do?”

And in two minutes more it was so arranged. Mrs. Thornham was leaning on the arm of Sir Geoffrey Charlton, while Blanche had taken that of Mandeville, and Charles Grenville, with his accustomed good nature, was facilitating the ingress of the whole party, by taking on himself the task of pioneer.

“How gay, how beautiful this is!” exclaimed Blanche, very much delighted, as, after being fairly launched beyond the difficulties of the entrance, they passed on to that part of the gardens now thronged with groups of all that London could boast of most distinguished for rank, beauty, and fashion. Nothing could exceed the brilliancy of the scene, and to Blanche, at

that moment, nothing could exceed its enjoyment.

“You will allow that London is not so dismal and dingy as you fancied it half an hour ago,” said Mandeville.

“Dismal! Can anything be so gay as this? Is it any particular *fête* day, or is it the same every Sunday?”

“I think there are rather more people than usual—do you not think so, Grenville?” said Mandeville to Charles Grenville, who was walking on the other side.

“Perhaps there are. I think there were as many last Sunday, however.”

“And what do people do here?” inquired Blanche again. “What are those buildings for? Is there dancing or music, or anything of that sort going on in them.”

Mandeville laughed.



“Very likely there may be,” said he, “but of a different sort, I fancy, from what you are thinking of. Do you not remember that we are in the Zoological Gardens?”

“Oh, to be sure. I had forgotten,” said Blanche, laughing in her turn. “But it all comes to the same thing. There are dancing bears, and dancing dogs, and singing from morning till night, I daresay. I do not at all see why we should not all follow so good an example.”

“My dear Miss Thornham, you surely forget that we are in England.”

“Ah, true; but what strange, inconsistent people you are in England, Mr. Mandeville. What can be the difference between music and dancing and all this gaiety? Can the dogs and bears put on their good behaviour, too?”

"On the contrary, they are more than usually frolicsome from having so many visitors to look at them. Shall we make the tour of the gardens, or would you prefer sitting down?"

"Oh, the tour of the gardens, by all means. I should like to see everything. How beautiful it is!"

At this moment Lord Errington passed them, and Captain Grenville joined him.

"Who is that?" inquired Blanche, as Mandeville spoke to his cousin as he passed.

"Lord Errington."

"Oh, indeed. He is going to marry Lady Wrexham's beautiful cousin, Miss Morton, is he not?"

"So the world says."

"But is it not true?"

“Very likely,” said Mandeville, carelessly; “but I am not in their secrets. Shall we turn to the left, Charlton?” said he, turning to Sir Geoffry, who was making himself *particularly* amiable to Mrs. Thornham.

“The ladies will find it very hot up there to-day, I think—there is no shade at all, you know,” replied Sir Geoffry, who did not half like the prospect of the broiling promenade that seemed impending.

Mandeville turned to Blanche.

“Oh, I am too well accustomed to an Italian sun to think anything of this,” said she, and Sir Geoffry had no help for it, but to endure the penance to which he had voluntarily bound himself as he best might. It was an unfortunate commencement to his *chasse au lièvre*, this burning ordeal

“Ombra adorata,” exclaimed Blanche, as after returning with but half the tour completed, they seated themselves in a group in the shade. “Sir Geoffry Charlton certainly was right. I never felt an Italian sun so scorching as this.”

“I am afraid you will never be reconciled to our climate after that of *la bella Italia*,” said Mandeville.

“Do you meditate returning to Italy?” inquired Sir Geoffry of Mrs. Thornham.

“Oh, dear no; I hope not.”

“It would be cruel to bring Miss Thornham amongst us, only to take her away again,” pursued Sir Geoffry, with a glance of admiration at Blanche.

“I do not think that Blanche herself wishes it;” and the smile that played

round Mrs. Thornham's mouth told that Sir Geoffry's allusion had not been altogether without effect.

He was right. A mother is rarely, never perhaps, insensible to the praises of her child.

"I am already reconciled to everything in England," said Blanche, in answer to Mandeville's observation, "and think it all very delightful. But I shall never understand your ways of doing things here. For instance, what is the use of a *fête champêtre*—and this is one to all intents, if not to all purposes—and what are all these beautiful toilets for, if one is forbidden to dance?"

"Of infinite use, I assure you. This *fête champêtre*, as you call it, is the only occasion on which one may be tolerably sure

of meeting all one's friends once a week without risk of suffocation. It is the only place at which those beautiful toilets can be displayed without risk of annihilation. People, in fact, come only to kill time, to see and be seen, to learn what is going on in the world, which during the bustle of the week is impossible, and to add their own quota to the general stock in return. For all these purposes, this *fête champêtre* is invaluable."

"*A la bonne heure*; and when they are tired of all this, which, to those who come, as you say, every week, must, I should say, very soon happen, unless they have something better to do, what then?"

"They have the monkeys, and the bears, and the elephant to look at."

“Well, you are a very strange people in England, Mr. Mandeville, I must say,” said Blanche, looking very comical, and, as Mandeville thought, excessively pretty. “For my part, I think that after people have expended as much time and trouble on their toilet as if they were going to a ball, and then come here, as you say, only to kill time, and to see and be seen, there could be no greater harm in dancing than in—”

“You must not take me quite ‘au pied de la lettre.’ There may be many other attractions to bring one here, though all are not equally fortunate, Signorina,” said Mandeville, in his own soft, low tones.

Blanche coloured slightly, and turned away her head.

“Who is that extraordinary-looking per-



son?" said she to Geoffry Charlton, as a lady of enormous dimensions, with a profusion of satin, blonde, and feathers, sailed past them. "Lord Errington was talking to her, I think."

"Lady Courtney," replied Sir Geoffry, very well pleased to be addressed by the heiress. "What in the world can Errington find to amuse him in her conversation?" pursued he, addressing Mandeville.

"A great deal, I should think. She is excessively amusing in her way, and that little lady in pink, by her side, is perfectly *impayable*."

"Ah, by the way, they say Sir John means to make her his heir, do they not?"

"Yes; and he is enormously rich, they say. If money makes the woman as much



as it makes the man, she will be a prize worth having one of these days."

"But who on earth could marry such a little Hottentot as that?" drawled Sir Geoffry.

"Who? Why, anyone who has sense enough to count up a hundred thousand charms," said the merry voice of Charles Grenville behind them. "Come, Charlton, you have been sitting here for the last hour, do, like a good fellow, lend me your chair for five minutes?"

"Take mine," said Mandeville, for Sir Geoffry showed no inclination to move; and as Captain Grenville did so, he himself brought another from a little distance, and placed it so as to enjoy an almost exclusive *tête-à-tête* with Blanche.

"I have been waiting for my sisters at

the gate for the last half-hour," continued Charles Grenville, "till I am positively ready to drop. I believe they are coming in search of you, Mrs. Thornham, to propose some pic-nic, or water party, or something of that sort."

"They are very kind; we shall be delighted to join them in anything," and as she spoke, Mrs. Thornham rose, and advanced, with Captain Grenville, to meet the party who were coming towards them. Sir Geoffrey Charlton did the same, and thus Blanche and Mandeville were accidentally left alone, without being aware of it, for both were too much absorbed in whatever formed the subject of discussion between them to observe the movements of the rest of the party. Blanche's looks were on the ground as Mrs. Thornham rose,

while Mandeville, whose chair was placed opposite to hers, and with its back towards the gravel walk, along which the promenaders were passing, was, to all appearance, engaged in earnest conversation, with his eyes fixed on her beautiful countenance.

“I wish you would promise—do oblige me—pray do—you cannot think how I should value it,” said he, in continuation of something that had been said before.

“Indeed, I shall do no such thing,” said Blanche, looking up with a bright blush and a brighter smile, and shaking back her glossy ringlets.

“Blanche, my love,” said Mrs. Thornham, “here is Lady Wrexham.”

Miss Thornham looked up, and her tell-tale cheek was in a moment dyed crimson. Mandeville started to his feet, for the foot-

steps on the grass had not reached his ear, while his words, though spoken in so low a tone, must, he thought, have been distinctly audible to those near him. He looked round. Emily Morton was by his side.

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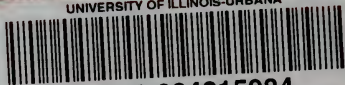








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